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INFALLIBILITY
AN ECUMENICAL DISCUSSION

JEEVADHARA
The People of God

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Editorial

Any doctrinal and theological discussion today on the One Church of Jesus Christ must cut across denominational boundaries and categories. Only by a common or ecumenical effort on the part of all the Churches shall we be able to understand more and more the ineffable Mystery of the Church. In 1970, at the centenary of the First Vatican Council's definition of Papal Infallibility, Hans Kung opened a fresh discussion on the Infallibility of the Church, and the subject became a most lively and controversial one in the 1970s. Ten years are over now, and it is time to review the balance-sheet of this heated discussion and exchanges, and to take this question to a wider, ecumenical circle.

This number of *Jeevadhara* is such an attempt. In the first article Carl Fonseca brilliantly summarizes the inside story of Vatican I, where the dogma of Infallibility was defined. The historical and political background of the period, the heated debate within the Council between the majority and the minority, and the personal interest as well as interferences of Pope Pius IX in the Council, all these must be taken into consideration for a real understanding and the right interpretation of the definition of Vatican I. The author concludes that the affirmation of Papal authority by the definition of Papal Infallibility corresponded to the historical development in the secular world, which craved for absolute political authority to reestablish peace and order.

Kuncheria Pathil introduces the recent Catholic Debate on Infallibility for the non-specialists, who are not familiar with the recent literature on Infallibility. It is an objective presentation of the views and argumentations of Hans Kung and the critical reactions to him by various theologians. In conclusion he offers a balanced view of the dogma of Infallibility placing this charism inside the whole Christian community and insisting on the communion between Pope and the Episcopal College and between hierarchy and the community.

Christopher Duraisingh offers critical reflections on the Papal Infallibility from the point of view of a non-Roman Catholic Indian-Christian. First of all, he identifies the theological concerns that underlie the dogma and calls on all to affirm them with the Roman Catholics. Then he examines the problematic of the dogma of Papal Infallibility for the Protestants from the methodological as well as theological stand point.

An Oriental Orthodox view of the dogma of Infallibility is presented by K. M. George. Instead of directly facing the question of infallibility he starts the discussion with an examination of the oriental Orthodox concept of the nature of the Church. When the Church is moved by the Holy Spirit who is its indwelling power, the quality of truth manifests itself. It is, however, not objectively reduced to any person or institution or proposition. The full manifestation of this truth is eschatological to which we all aspire in faith, hope and love.

'A question about the Infallibility of the Church' by J. C. Manalel is, in fact, a 'theological meditation' where he invites us to be self-critical, critical of our own Church, instead of falling into a false complacency and security in the name of Infallibility. He examines certain areas where we have enough reason to repent and convert ourselves, rather than glory or take refuse in immunity from error. The cause of infallibility is better served by living up to the gospel.

Shantikumar Emilianus reviews an important work of Brian Tierney, on the *Origins of Papal Infallibility*. Tierney traced its origins to the Franciscan Spirituals of the 13th century, especially to Pietro Olivi (1248-1298), who formulated the doctrine of Papal Infallibility to defend the Franciscan ideal of Evangelical Poverty as ratified by Pope Nicholas III against the attacks of others including Pope John XXII.

As Gregory Baum has rightly pointed out, the Infallibility debate has exposed two different methodologies used in theology, represented by Hans Kung and Karl Rahner: These two methodologies must be brought together and complemented. Scriptural basis as well as historical development of dogmas must be equally emphasized. Due attention must be given to the experience of the early Christian community and to contemporary experience.

Infallibility may be a bad term, which can be easily misunderstood today. Perhaps we need another term to safeguard and communicate the kernel of truth behind the dogma of Infallibility. So reinterpretation of the dogma of Infallibility of Vatican I is an urgent task of theology today. We hope that this number of *Jeevadhara* will give some stimulus to it.

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The Infallibility Debate in Vatican I

The Vatican Council assembled on December 8, 1869 as the nineteenth General Council of the Catholic Church. More than 700 bishops, abbots and generals of religious orders gathered in the council hall, situated in the left wing of the Latin Cross of St Peter's Basilica. United in their faith and owing allegiance to the same Pontiff, different in most other respects. The Eastern bishops – traditionally known to be jealous of their independence, their power and national customs - were now even more sensitive on the subject because of the recent conversions among schismatics who were unaccustomed to interference in their ecclesiastical organizations by external, that is, Latin authorities. The American bishops, hailing from a democratic country, were cautious of any Roman interference in their way of life as was evidenced by the publication of the Syllabus. The French bishops were sharply divided into three parties, whose controversies were still being publicised by the world press.

The question of procedure claimed the first attention of the Pope. It was customary for the councils to elaborate their own rules. Pius IX fearing that practice would become the occasion of misunderstandings and prolonged debates decided to arrogate to himself the right to regulate the working of the Council. This was made known to the Fathers in the pre-Synodal Session on 2nd December. By the brief *Multiplices,* the Pope informed the assembly (1) that the right of presenting *postulata* to the Assembly wolud belong exclusively to the Holy See; (2) the Fathers could only do so *privatim* and after a previous communication to a congregation appointed by the Pope; (3) the projects elaborated by the commission of theologians would be proposed first; (4) the presidents of the General Congregations would be Cardinals Luca, Bilio, Reisach Bizzari and Capalti,

all nominated by the Pope. Pius' intention was to speed up the deliberations of the Council, but the centralized character of the regulation excited dismay amongst the bishops already disturbed by an article in the Jesuit monthly, *Civilta Catholica*, calling for the definition of Infallibility by acclamation. They felt that the Pope distrusted them, and wished, by stifling discussion in the Council, to impose on them a programme already drawn up by the Holy See. Nor were these fears allayed by the tone of some Catholic papers partial to the Holy See. "When will the Pope proclaim the definition of infallibility?" - wrote the ultramontane Louis Venillot, editor of *L'Univers* on 4th December. A deputation of 15 bishops laid before the Pope their fears. He assured them of his good intentions and that "he wished that they should all be free" in contributing to the debates. By the end of December the bishops were informed that they could form groups to draw up their own proposals. By February a pontifical act proclaimed the principle of "complete freedom of discussion".

The attitudes of the Bishops, especially those from Europe concerning infallibility divided them into two groups. Those who favoured the definition were known as Ultramontanes and formed the majority; and those who opposed it were a minority and they did so because they considered the definition inopportune in a world growing more liberal and opposed to the authoritarianism which infallibility represented. The leader of the Ultramontane majority was Mgr. Dechamps, Archbishop of Malines. He was a great figure in Belgium and a highly trained theologian. It could be fairly said about him that no bishop had so great a hand in the formulation of the two great dogmatic constitutions of the Council. Another driving force on the side of the Ultramontanes was Manning, Archbishop of Westminister, England. Whatever view he held, he did so with whole-hearted conviction of its truth. His powers of organization and diplomacy were put to effective use during the Council. Another influential Ultramontane was Cardinal Cullen of Dublin, a sound theologian and one familiar with Roman traditions, having served as Rector of the Irish College in Rome.

The leaders of the Minority were two Austrian Cardinals,

Schwarzenburg of Prague and Rauscher of Vienna. Among the German bishops was Melchers of Cologne. But the outstanding German bishop was Hefele of Rottenburg, deeply learned in history and patrology. Not all the German and Austrian bishops were in the minority. Gasser of Brixen and Martin of Paderborn were convinced Ultramontanes, with Senestry of Ratisbon whose ultramontane loyalties were as strong as those of Manning's, and both strove hard to secure as stringent a definition of infallibility as the Council would permit. Perhaps Strossmayer, Bishop of Bosnia and Sirmium (Slavonia) could be regarded as the most militant of the minority and often became the centre of many stormy interventions at the Council. The fierest divisions occurred among the French bishops since both Liberalism and Ultramontanism were born in France. The ostensible leader of the French Ultramontanes was Cardinal Donnet of Bordeaux but its real leadership belonged to Mgr. Pie, Bishop of Poitiers. He was an uncompromising ultramontane of the school of Bellarmine and one of the most striking figures at the Council. But it was the ranks of the Minority which counted amongst its adherents the most dynamic and brilliant of the Council Fathers. The French Minority group was presided over by Cardinal Mathieu, Archbishop of Besançon. But its chief whip, in fact of the whole Minority, was Bishop Dupanloup of Orleans. His dynamism and organizing ability matched those of Manning. But not Dupanloup but, unquestionably, Darboy of Paris was the most influential leader of the French Minority bishops, a man of great culture and intellectual gifts; he eventually met with his death at the hands of the Communists during the Revolution of 1870. He was one of the most determined opponents of the definition.

Presages of the storm to break out at the Council were already becoming manifest. In May 1869, Mgr. Dechamps of Malines published a pastoral letter under the title *L'Infallibilite et le Concile Generale*. Its purport was (1) that the doctrine of the Pope's Infallibility was definable, that his expectation was that it would be defined; (2) that it would not be a new dogma but a doctrine as old as the Church. In October, Cardinal Manning in a long letter to his clergy summed up the arguments in favour of infallibility in an ultramontane sense. Other bishops worte pastorals of a pacificatory character

striving to allay the excitement stirred up in the minds of
the public, whether Catholic or not. But a sharp controversy
in the press broke out between Manning and Dupanloup
on Manning's pastoral. Dupanloup had criticized Dechamp's
pastoral too, in his dispute with Manning. Dechamps from
Rome sent a lengthy but restrained reply to Dupanloup. The
question of "separate infallibility", that is, the Pope speaking
ex cathedra is infallible without the concurrence of the bishops
was the point in dispute between Dupanloup and his opponents.
It subsequently became the bone of contention during the
debates in the Council. In such an atmosphere of heated
controversy, the bishops came to the Council in Nov. 1869.

The opening of the council

The Vatican Council began with a Pre-Synodal Congre-
gation held on 2nd December in the Sistine Chapel. Five
Cardinals were appointed to preside over the General Congre-
gations: Cardinals Reisach, de Luca, Bizzari, Billio and
Capalti. On Reisach's death, Cardinal de Angelis replaced
him. A brief "Multiplices inter" was issued laying down the
order of procedure at the Council. It vested in the Pope the
right to propose subjects for the consideration of the Council.
The bishops were accorded the freedom to put forward their
own proposals in writing to a special Congregation which in
turn would submit them to the Pope who would decide whether
they should be placed before the Council. The business of the
Council was to be transacted in General Congregations and
Public Sessions, the latter being the solemn and final functions
marking each stage of the Council. Schemata on different
topics were to be prepared and distributed to the Fathers.
Those desirous of speaking were required to give notice of
this to the Cardinal Presidents and an order of precedence
would be observed in the matter. Others could then take the
podium. Four deputations of 24 Fathers, elected by secret
ballot would deal with matters of dispute. When a scheme
was finally passed at a General congregation, a Public Session
would follow presided over by the Pope.

The Council was formally opened on 8th December at
which the assembled Fathers signified their assent to its inau-

guration by a voice vote. The Pope presided on the occasion. The first General Congregation was held on 10th December, in the presence of 679 Fathers. The names of the *Congegatio de Postulatis* was announced. There were 12 Cardinals and amongst them were Rauscher of Vienna, Bonnechose of Rottenburg and Cullen of Dublin.

The second General Congregation was held on 14th December. At this Session the election of the members of the various deputations by secret ballot brought the battle over the definition of Pope's Infallibility to the surface, after the skirmishing which had preceded the opening of the Council. The dispute centred round the *Deputatio de Fide*. It was clear to everyone that this particular *deputatio* would play a major role as regards the definition of infallibility. Manning is reported to have called a meeting of ultramontane bishops to keep a close watch and counteract the French and German bishops who were uniting in an international committee.

The infallibilists had joined hands to push through the definition at any cost. They were Manning, Senestrey of Ratisbon, Dechamps of Malines, Martin of Paderborn and others. Their first objective was the election of the *deputatio de fide*. Manning's committee consisting of 40 bishops, all infallibilists, agreed that (1) only infallibilists should be elected to the *deputatio de fide*; (2) they should represent various nations; (3) the names chosen should be transmitted to the Archbishop of Westminister. The list consisted of 24 names and was submitted to Cardinal de Angelis. The list was later distributed among the bishops as being approved by Cardinal de Angelis. Consequently, all the 24 were elected. The Minority were thus excluded, without a single representative to voice its views, on the *deputatio de fide*, the most important committee of the Council. This was contrary to the Pope's wishes. He had expressed the desire that Dupanloup should be on the *deputatio de fide*. The consequence of this act of Manning was to transform the Minority into an opposition conscious of the fact that the Majority was bent on over-whelming it with its numbers without giving it a chance to make its views heard. Manning's position was that "heretics come to a Council to

be heard and condemned, not to take part in formulating doctrine". If the election of the *deputatio de fide* revealed anything, it was that the Minority were in no position to challenge the Majority on any decision arrived at by votes. After this striking victory over the election of the *deputatio de fide*, the Majority allowed the Minority adequate represent-ation on the other three deputations.

The first debates

The Council may be said to have launched on the sub-stantial work of the agenda only by January. The Sessions in the *aula conciliaris* were taken up with interminable discussions on relatively non-controversial texts dealing with rationalism and other minor points of ecclesiastical discipline. It became clear to the Infallibilists that the subject of special concern to them would be postponed beyond the summer when the Council would be recessed and would perhaps even then by-passed. The theologians of the Council had already been questioned on the possibility of the definition and had expressed their opinion that the doctrine was definable theologically but drew attention to the impropriety of the Apostolic See broaching the subject in the absence of a request from the bishops. Thus the subject of infallibility did not even figure in the official documents of the Council. But infallibility had become a burn-ing question even before the Council was called and had agitated the best minds in the Church. It was almost certain at the time that the matter would be brought up for a formal definition. This possibility eventually materialized.

After the first victory at the election of the *deputatio de fide,* Manning and Senestry, both of whom had taken a private vow to bring about the definition, set to work to organize a petition signed by a substantial majority of bishops that the question of infallibility be put on the agenda of the Council. They circulated a petition which collected some 480 signatures, calling on the Pope to grant their request. The Minority re-acted by collecting signatures on a counter-petition which was signed by only 136 bishops. Pope Pius IX decided on 6th March to accede to the request of the Majority. The topic of

infallibility, at the Pope's direction, was inserted into the schema of the dogmatic constitution of the Church.

The General Congregation, which had been suspended since 22nd February, was resumed on 18th March. Rumours were now afloat of an attempt to carry the definition of infallibility by acclamation. This was a fear which was not without some foundation. As the Council worked at its normal pace, those for whom infallibility was the central and most important subject, perceived, with growing fear that the possibility of its ever being taken up was becoming increasingly remote. Eight petitions signed by nearly 200 Fathers were presented to the Pope praying that the question of the Papacy be taken up immediately, after the enactment at Easter of the first part of the Constitution on the Catholic Faith. The Presidents of the Council were unwilling to allow any change of procedure. On Easter Tuesday, 19th April, Manning, Senestery and seven others directly approached the Pope and got an assurance that he would do what was right. Till April, to their increasing impatience, no action was taken. On 23rd April new petition signed by 100 Fathers was presented to the Pope requesting that the Schema on the Roman Pontiff be brought up at once. The response of the Pope was immediate. On 29th April, the Presidents announced that the question of the Roman Pontiff his Primacy and Infallibility would be taken up for discussion forthwith.

The infallibility debate

Though the public announcement was made on 29th April, the Deputation was not ready with the revised Schema till 13th May. The first Schema had already reached the hands of the Bishops on 6th March. A hundred and forty sets of comments had been sent in by 25th March and a folio of amendments by 29th March. The Deputation meanwhile worked on recasting the schema and distributed it into four chapters - the primacy, its perpetuity, its nature and infallibility. It revealed a strongly ultramontane bias and for the most part confined itself to answering the objections and difficulties raised against infallibility. It took its stance on the basis of dogmatic theology. If it asserted from the two funts of

Scripture and Tradition (to be discerned in the acts of ecumenical councils rather than in history) the doctrine of papal infallibility is seen to have been part of the original Revelation, then no arguments from history could avail against it. What was then of importance was to determine whether the Pope really spoke as universal Teacher and Pastor and as using his Apostolic authority; whether it was really a matter of faith and morals pertaining to the universal church, whether it was properly and truly a definition or peremptory sentence. It also gave its attention to the difficulties urged against the definition and considered only four of any weight - (1) the case of Pope Virgilius (2) the case of Pope Honorius (3) the letter of Eugenius IV to the Armenians concerning the Sacraments, specially Holy Orders and, lastly (4) the bull "Unam Sanctam" of Boniface VIII. The Deputation devoted prolonged and minute attention to the precise wording of the infallibility definition. It completed its work on 8th May, and on the following day the recast Constitution along with the Theologians' report reached the Bishops.

On 13th May, the Great Debate at the General Congregation opened with an exposition of the Constitution by Mgr. Pie of Poitiers. It continued for fifteen days and its focus was the opportuneness of defining infallibility. Some of the major contributions to the debate are set forth below.

Card. Patrizi, Dean of the Sacred College spoke first, in favour of the definition.

Rivet of Dijon: The personal and absolute infallibility of the Pope, for that is what it really is, would be intolerable for men of the present day, disastrous for the general good of the Catholic church, and useless for the government of the church.

Dechamps of Malines: The infallibility envisaged by the definition could not rightly be called "personal and absolute", because it belonged to an office and could be exercised only under well-defined conditions, and in regard to truths contained explicitly or implicitly in the deposit of faith: infallibility is neither revelation nor inspiration.

Hefele of Rottenburg: If ever there was an *ex cathedra* dogmatic document it was Leo's letter to Flavian. But at the Council all the Bishops were called on to declare on oath if it was conformable to the Creeds of Nicea and Constantinople. It was not said to the Bishops, "Here is a dogmatic letter of the Pope, hear it and submit", but rather "hear it and judge". Some of the Bishops thought that in three places, it smacked of heresy, but no one said they were temerarious for doubting; no one questioned their right to doubt. And so a four fold argument against papal infallibility can be drawn from Chalcedon. He also spoke of Pope Honorius and the Sixth General Council and concluded with the words: "I yield to no one in reverence for the Apostolic See and the Holy Father; but I do not think it lawful to proceed to a declaration of infallibility. Bishops are witnesses, not arbiters of the Faith."
Archbishop of Saragossa: He pointed out that instead of Leo's letter being subjected to the free judgment of the Council, the Pope had instructed the Legates to allow no change in it, and in fact it was accepted without any change whatever.

Jussef, Graeco-Medite Patriarch of Antioch: The definition would directly hit the Orthodox Eastern Church and would destroy all hope of reunion. The Florence Decree should be re-enacted. The rights of Patriarchs should be respected.

Darboy of Paris: It is not primacy but infallibility that is in debate. It was not named in the Bull of Convocation or in the official documents of the Council but was introduced by demagogic agitation outside, so that the hands of the Bishops were unduly forced. Say what they may, the infallibility proposed is personal, absolute, independent, separate. The terms of the definition are vague and uncertain. The definition would not cure the ills of the world. It should be enacted with the moral unanimity of the Council: should there be a substantial minority, the validity and orthodoxy of the Council will be exposed to doubt.

Manning; He was convinced that infallibility was Catholic doctrine: to question it was at least material heresy. It was not open to theological opinion but a doctrine contained in

the divine revelation. Speaking of his experience as an English Bishop he could say infallibility would be a powerful attraction to those outside the church. Protestants in England desired an escape from the chaos and confusion reigning in their ranks. It was not so much a question of counting converts but the progressive penetration of the English nation by catholic ideas and doctrine. Even secular newspapers had recognized that infallibility was a logical outcome of the Catholic system. The shelving of the question at Trent had disastrous results; worse would follow should the Vatican Council, after facing it, fail to speak with a decisive voice. *Clifford*: The infallibility of the Pope could not be treated apart from that of the church. The bugbear of English Protestantism is the Pope and the idea that he acts in the church as tyrant. Infallibility would now turn him into a despot. He called for a conference of members of the Deputation of the Faith and the Minority to arrive at an amicable solution of the question. This request was turned down by the Presidents as unnecessary. The mischief of loading the Deputation with ultramontanes had already been done, even against the Pope's intention and it continued to sully the course of the Council.

Strossmayer: He foresaw that the definition would be an obstacle to the reunion of the Slavonic Orthodox Churches with the Catholic Church.

The guillotine

3rd June was the last day of the debate. Bishop Maret of the Sorbomse spoke last in very Gallidan terms, a long speech lasting an hour and a half. When he had finished, Fessler, secretary of the Congregation, announced from the ambo that in deference to a request of more than 150 Fathers of the Council the President would put an end to the discussion on the Schema To prolong the debate was a waste of time. The matter was put to vote and carried by a majority amidst applause. This closure of the discussion did not however meet with general acceptance. A protest from the Minority was registered as violating the right of the Fathers to give the

reasons for their vote. The protest was signed by the leaders of the Minority – Schwartzenburg, Mathieu, Rauscher and several other leading Archbishops. The application of closure the only one later cast doubts on the validity of the acts of the Council and on the definition. But it was a procedure, justified both by the practice of most parliaments and by the fact that most members of the Minority had had their say. The whole debate let it be said, gave evidence of a high level of discussion informed with deep learning, restraint and courtesy by the speakers and patience and forbearance on the part of the Fathers.

The debate on the text of the decree on infallibility

The debate on the Primacy was neither prolonged nor very controversial. The "observations" of the Bishops on the text of the Infallibility Decree put into their hands on 6th March had revealed great divergences of opinion. The synopsis prepared by the theologians of the *Deputatio de fide* was com prehensive and impartial. All the difficulties those derived from Scripture, Councils, Fathers, history; those drawn from the current situation facing the Church, namely, the danger of antagonizing Governments, repelling Protestants and compro- mising reunion with the Eastern churches were set out with out deference to any of the diverging opinions The case for the definition was set out with equal comprehensiveness. Among the suggestions made was Ullathorne's plea that the term *ex cathedra* should be introduced into the definition. It had a long history by its use in the schools and its introduc- tion would prevent uncertainties and controversies after the Council. It was later discovered that Ullathorne's suggestion was inspired by Cardinal de Angelis, head of the Deputation.

The debate began on 15th June. One hundred and twenty Fathers expressed their desire to participate. The debate was meant for amending the text of the decree on infallibility. It was a Committee Stage debate but the speakers tended to be both longwinded and strayed from the point at issue - the amendment of the Decree. The Minority Bishops opened the proceedings.

Mathieu of Besancon: He protested against an analogy drawn by the Patriarch of Jerusalem in the general debate between Monothelitism and Gallicanism.

Rauscher of Vienna: He drew a distinction between the Pope's power of jurisdiction and power of magisterium. The three councils cited speak only of jurisdiction and are wrongly cited in Chapter IV (on infallibility) He proposed the formula of St Antoninus, "The successor of St Peter using the counsel and seeking for help of the universal Church, cannot err" whatever formula was used, the "consent of the churches" should form part of it.

Cardinal Guidi of Bologna, a Dominican, distinguished Thomist theologian and professor of the Universities of Rome and Vienna: Guidi sought to bring about a reconciliation between the two warring parties at the Council. He drew a distinction between the person of the Pope and his actions. The divine assistance accorded the Pope, he said, was a transient act and not a permanent quality. It makes the act infallible not the person. Therefore the title of Chapter IV should not be the "Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff" "but the "Infallibility of his dogmatic definitions". Thus Guidi met the objection to the idea of personal infallibility. He went on to say that it should be made clear in the decree that it is not the Pope alone who issues a definition but the Pope along with bishops consenting because, as Bellarmine had laid down, the Pope was bound to use ordinary human diligence, namely, consulting the bishops, before he issues a definition. Therefore he would add to the definition... "having made investigation as to the traditions of the other churches, and having taken counsel with more or fewer bishops according to the circumstances".

The speech came as a bomb shell to the assembly. The Minority was pleasantly agitated to find a supporter of such eminence. Dechamps Darboy, and Kettler met in a conference to see whether Guidi's speech could not be made the basis of an accord with the Majority. It was decided eventually not to introduce a new schema but to let the debate

take its course. The Pope, when the speech was reported to him, was agitated too but not in the same way the Minority were. In an interview to which he summoned Guidi he expressed his dissatisfaction that a bishop of the Papal States should oppose him. Guidi explained that his intention was only to represent the bishops as witnesses to tradition. The Pope, visibly angry, exploded "Tradition? I am tradition." It had become apparent to the Fathers that Papal interference in the course of the debates was becoming increasingly obtrusive and his impatience with the opponents of the definition more evident.

Conolly of Halifax (Canada): He averred that neither the Petrine texts nor the three pieces cited in the Schema proved infallibility. The question was not whether the Pope was infallible but whether he was infallible, as St Antoninus' formula stated, "using the counsel and assistance of the Church".

Landriot of Rheims: He proposed that the doctrine be held "true and Catholic" but not as a dogma of the Faith. Landriot voted consistently with the Minority, later "placet juxta modum" and on the last voting, "placet".

The debate at this point became wearisome and repetitive and two petitions for closure were made to the Presidents, but in vain. On 2nd July the first voting on the Proem and Chapters I and II were completed. Then the discussion on Chapter IV continued. On 4th July the *Acta* notes that the heat became increasingly trying to the bishops listening to speeches for 4 hours a day. Manning, Haynald, and some others took it upon themselves to request the remaining speakers to waive their right to speak. There was some hesitation but finally all agreed.

The debate was closed on 4th July. The *deputatio de fide* set itself to the task of digesting the mass of observations proposed and reducing them to sizeable proportions. From these deliberations of the *deputatio* three formulas emerged (vide Appendix). Formula A was prepared by the Theologians before the Council and circulated on 6 March, discussed by the Bishops and returned to the *deputatio* with their observations

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Formula B is the revised Formula A, circulated on 9 May, and debated in May and June. Formula C is the final shape given to the discussions of the *deputatio*, proposed to the Council on 9th July, passed on the 13th, and finally enacted on the 18th. It differs from the others basically by the addition of the celebrated "ex cathedra" and an ultimate clause - "and not from the consent of the Church" - added on the 16th by the Presidents of the Council.

On 11th July, Mgr. Gasser, bishop of Brien, in the Austrian Tyrol, as spokesman for the *deputatio de fide*, in the longest speech ever made at the Council - lasting four hours - reviewed the whole subject, summarized the objections and explained the positions assumed by the deputation on the three formulas. Gasser took up the objections and answered them in some detail. A brief summation is given below:

Obj: Future General Councils will not be necessary.

Ans: They will be necessary in the future as in the past. The Church always opposed errors with a most solemn judgement in a General Council. But such a judgement is always of an ecumenical Council - the Pope with the Bishops·

Obj: General Councils in future will not be free. Bishops will no more be real judges.

Ans: They will be. In the future. councils will be held with or without a previous dogmatic definition of the Pope on a point at issue. If a dogmatic definition has preceded the Council, it will act as the Third Council of Constantinople and as Chalcedon acted in face of the bogamtic letters of Popes Agatho or Leo.

Obj: In what sense is the Pope's infallibility personal?

Ans: It is personal insofar as it belongs to each legitimate occupant of the Roman See, but not to the Pope as a private person or private doctor; and that too as subject to the divine assistance guiding him.

Obj: In what sense is infallibility of the Pope to be called separate?

Ans: In the sense that it is founded on the special promise of Christ which is not the same as that enjoyed by the whole body – the Church.

Obj: In what sense is the Pope's infallibility absolute?

Ans: It is not absolute because absolute infallibility belongs to God alone.

Gasser then went on to consider three axioms proposed by critics of the definition:

1) The "witness of the bishops" should be placed in the definition as one of the conditions that are of faith.

Ans: "Do thou confirm thy brethren" in the relation between Peter and the Apostles and therefore . . ,

2) But the members should be joined to the head and *vice versa*. Hence strict and absolute need of the counsel of the bishops.

Ans: This is the main point of disagreement. Gasser did not elaborate.

3) As the bishops can do nothing in making dogmas of faith, so also the Pope can do nothing without them.

Ans: The first part is true because a General Council cannot pronounce infallible decrees by itself. But Christ said to Peter alone "Thou art Peter..."

4) *Obj*: The consent of the churches is the rule of faith.

Ans: This is true, but it cannot be deduced that there is a strict and absolute necessity for consulting the bishops. There are other fonts, namely, Holy Scripture, agreement of antiquity, opinions of theologians.

Gasser then considered the emendations stating the reason why some were rejected He upheld the importance of the historical preamble as answering the desires contained in many emendations. Touching on the amendments to the definition he took up for consideration those recommending some insertion, namely,

1) St Antoninus' Formula: It was vague and indefinite in the opinion of the Deputation and would give rise to controversies

whether the counsel and the help of the church had been properly used. All other conditions were rejected as unduly restricting the infallibility of the Pope. An opportunity for bringing the two opposing parties to an agreement and thus securing universal agreement to the definition was certainly lost at this stage, by the rejection of the St Antoninus' Formula. He then came to the new formula, Formula C, the one finally adopted unanimously by the Deputation It contained Ullathorne's addition - *ex cathedra*. The reason for its acceptance he outlined briefly as follows:

1) The subject of infallibility was the Roman Pontiff.

2) The condition of the act of infallibility, is that the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*.

3) The principle or efficacious cause of infallibility, Christ or the assistance of the Holy Ghost.

4) Its object: doctrine of faith and morals.

5) He expatiated at some length on the word "definit".

"Definit" is not to be taken in a forensic sense as silencing a controversy concerning a heresy or a doctrine of the faith. Rather the Pope issues a declaration on a doctrine of faith or morals so as to assure the faithful on the mind of the Church or the Roman Pontiff on the subject in dispute.

What was the position of the Minority on the definition of Infallibility? In brief, they stressed that the Pope and the Church should be linked together in the definition, that is, the Pope should appear not only as the head but the mouth of the mystical body of Christ, speaking in union with the Church and under the influence of her magisterium and infallibility. Hence, the import of all the amendments made by them was to link the Church with the Pope. It was not a Gallican position pure and simple. A concession on the formula of St Antoninus' would have won their unanimous support. Even Bellarmines "ex apostolica traditione" if it had been accepted by the *deputatio* would have resolved the existing differences on the definition. Hefele's amendment pointed to this possibility. He proposed the addition of a clause which, if accepted, would attract the support of the Minority for the definition. His

addition was: relying (innixus) either on the ecclesiastical tradi
tion, or on the counsel and help of the whole magisterium".

The various amendments proposed show that even a
minor concession would have satisfied the Minority. One am-
endment read: "as head of the Body of Christ and mouth of
Church"; another: "according to the deposit of divine tradi-
tion". Such too was Ullathorne's amendment: "ex magisterio
ecclesiae". None of these amendments was accepted and Ulla-
thorne's was not even placed before the Assembly. Very likely
it would have been rejected as too vague and uncertain in its
practical application.

What then was the position of the Majority? They
seemed to have been haunted by the spectre of Gallicanism
and they were determined to exorcise it out of the Church
once and for all. The Gallican expression "ex consensu eccle-
siae" was anathema to them. The fears of the Minority appear-
ed to them unreasonable and unrealistic. They considered it
beyond the bounds of possibility that any Pope defining a dog-
matic doctrine would do so without taking due counsel or
applying his mind to a serious study of the subject. To think
otherwise would be to discount the role of God's Providence
and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. However there was some
feeling of guilt on imposing an opinion still prevalent in
the minds of the *deputatio* which they sought to allay by the
introduction of an extended historical preamble at the eleventh
hour to meet the objections of the Minority. This did have
some effect on many of the opponents of the definition among
them, Ullathorne, Tarnoczy, Archbishop of Salzburg and
Landriot, as also some of the French bishops who voted
"placet" at the Final Session.

At the General Congregation. after Gasser's speech the
recommendations of the *deputatio de fide* were put to vote and
carried by overwhelming majorities. Four amendments were
adopted (1) the title "Roman Pontiff's Infallibility" was
changed to "The Roman Pontiff's Infallible Magisterium"
(Poor Guidi had thereby made ample amends); (2) the historical
preamble was incorporated; (3) formula 3 including Ullathorne's
ex cathedra (said to have been suggested by Card. de Angelis)
was adopted; (4) the canon was put under the form of
anathema like the other canons.

Wednesday. 13 July, for the Council of Cardinal Presidents was a day of the crucial test. Chapter III on the Primacy, and Chapter IV on Infallibility were voted on separately. Both were passed with a substantial majority. Then a trial ballot on the Constitution as a whole was held. Out of a total number of 601 votes, 451 voted *placet*, 88 *non-placet*, and 62 *juxta modum*. Nearly 76 bishops had already left Rome for their dioceses. One hundred and twenty amendments still pursued Chapter IV on Infallibility. This was due to important additions to the decree having been voted on and carried by large majorities, but never discussed. Some extremists of the majority were dissatisfied with para 2 which stated the Popes in exercising their infallibility had convoked councils or had ascertained the mind of the church; others objected to the limitation of infallibility to definitions of faith and morals.

On 14 July, the new amendments were printed and circulated. The *deputatio de fide* considered them the same day and rejected all but two: a citation from St. Augustine, as being out of context and another from St Irenaeus as being irrelevant. It was also decided that the final clause "ex sese irreformabiles esse" be amended with the addition of "non autem ex consensu Ecclesiae". On 16 July the two amendments were put to vote at the last General Congregation and were passed by large majorities. This marked the end of the Vatican Council as far as the business of the house was concerned.

The Fourth Public Session was proclaimed for Monday 18 July. For the Minority the remaining days were to be a period of acute discomfort and anxiety since the outcome of the Council was a foregone conclusion. To vote *non-placet* in the presence of the Pontiff would put them in a painful and embarrassing situation. A deputation of the Minority led by Archbishop Darboy presented to the Pope a written statement that if a clause like "Bishops not being excluded" was added to "when exercising the office of pastor and teacher of all nations" and if the clause (the full plenitude of this supreme power) added to the Chapter on the Primacy at the last moment was removed, the Minority would add their votes to that of the Majority to achieve the full moral consensus so earnestly desired. The Pope was touched and was disposed to accede to their request. But Manning had the Pope's ear and strongly opposed any concession. The Pope yielded to Manning's pressure and expressed to Darboy and his companions his inability to interfere in a matter which was an area of the Council's exclusive concern. After mutual consultation the

Minority bishops, influenced by Dupanloup, decided to with-draw from the final session. Dupanloup presented them with a dilemma: "We could not vote *placet*, for nobody would believe us; and we could not vote *non placet*, for the Catholic world would not understand us and might be scandalized."

The final Public Session took place on 18 July amidst a magnificent display of the natural elements - rain after a night of thunder and lightning. Claps of thunder punctuated each *placet* and the dim Aula was lit up by flashes of lightning. The result of the voting was 533 *placet* and two *non-placet* - two bishops Fitzgerald of Little Rock, U. S. A, and Riccio of Cajazzo, Italy, both of whom had been absent from the meeting of the Minority bishops and had not heard Dupanloup's call to withdraw from the Council.

The Pope put his seal of approbation on the decisions of the Council with the words - "Nosque, sacro approbante Concilio, illa ut lecta sunt, definimus et apostolica anctoritate confirmamus". As soon as the Pope finished speaking the two dissenting bishops fell at his feet and signified their consent. The consent of the other absent bishops followed soon after. The occupation of Rome by Emmanuel's troops on the 20 July compelled the Pope to prorogue the Council *sine die* and the Bishops hurriedly left Rome.

The affirmation of Papal authority by Vatican I was part of the historical developments in the secular world which was reflected in the Church by the Ultramontanists. They be-longed to the generation which had lived through the European revolutions, political and intellectual, and had fought to stem the tide of Liberalism by calling for a re-establishment of poli-tical authority as its only secure foundation. It was a period of centralization and imperialism. The Hegelian concept of the State as "God walking on earth" inspired Bismarck's "blood and iron" rule in Prussia; the Bonapartist dictatorship in France was founded on a negation of a free democratic society which Liberalism struggled for; the despotic rule of Franz Joseph of Austria was built on a denial of democratic princi-ples; the United States fought a civil war to assert the unity of a nation and Britain was founding an empire on the basis of a centralised political power. It was the belief of the Ultra-montanes, who formed the majority at the Council, that Church could only survive in the 19th century on the found-ation of a strong centralizing authority. Vatican I, in the domain of the spiritual, satisfied this 19th century European hunger for authority.

THE DEPUTATION DE FIDE

A.	B.	C.
Proposed by Theologians and commented on by the Bishops in written Observations.	Proposed by Deputation and Debated at the Public Discussions.	Form Finally Enacted.

A.	B.	C.
The Roman Pontiff cannot err when, exercising the office of supreme teacher of all Christians, he defines with authority what in matters of faith and morals is to be held by the universal Church: And this prerogative of inerrancy or infallibility of the Roman Pontiff reaches to the same object as the infallibility of the Church extends to.	The Roman Pontiff by the power of the divine assistance promised to him cannot err when, exercising the office of supreme teacher of all Christians, he defines with his apostolic authority what in matters of faith and morals is to be held by the universal Church as of faith, or is to be rejected as contrary to faith: and such decrees or judgements, irreformable of themselves, are to be received and held by every Christian with the full obedience of faith as soon as they become known to him. And because infallibility is the same whether it be regarded in the Roman Pontiff as the head of the Church, or in the universal Church teaching in union with the head, we define that this infallibility extends also to one and the same object.	The Roman Pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when exercising the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians he defines with his supreme apostolic authority a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised to him in St. Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to be endowed in defining doctrine concerning faith and morals: and therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves (and not from the consent of the Church).

Note: I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Bishop Butler's two volume study - *The Vatican Council*. I have drawn on it heavily for most of the matter in this article. But it gives me a deal of satisfaction for being able to put the contents of this classic work, in condensed form, at the disposal of the average clerical reader. Other works consulted are:

1) Fredrich Heyer, *The Catholic Church from 1648 to 1870*, 1969
2) Derek Holmes, *The Triumph of the Holy See*, 1978
3) Derek Holmes, *More Roman than Rome*, 1978
4) Roger Aubert, *The Christian Centuries* Vol 5, 1978
5) E. E. Y. Hales, *Pio Nono*, 1954.

Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth   Carl Fonseca

Puna

Origins of Papal Infallibility

This is a study of the *Origins of Papal Infallibility*: *1150-1350* wherein Brian Tierney, as a historian, investigates into the historical events that paved the way for the formulation of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. Tierny firmly believes in the saying: 'ideas are rooted in life'. It is also the contention of comtemporary thinkers that any speculation should be related to the concrete, existential life situation. Every theologian constructs his theology in the given situations and events of his lifetime - when he encounters problems at the national and international levels, when he is faced with a dispute over a particular issue in theological speculation etc. Thus, the doctrine of infallibility too was created at a particular point in history to meet the needs of certain people. Moved by such impulses Tierney sets out to explore the historical events and tries to contextualize the emergence of the doctrine of papal infallibility. As a historian, he does not claim to do the

theologian's work. But his work opens up a new avenue for the theological discussion on this controversial issue by re-tracing the history. I have tried to be faithful to the author of this invaluable book in focussing the main thrust of his work.

Traditional views

For a comprehensive understanding of any disputed issue, one must know the real history of this issue – its origin, originator, historical situation in which it was developed etc. Such a background is even more essential in the case of the problem of papal infallibility as understood in the twentieth century to re-trace its historical origin, and related aspects. This was attempted even during the Vatican Council I by Manning and Dollinger who developed two different lines of arguments. Manning maintained that the doctrine of Papal Infallibility was universally accepted in the early Church and that this was not articulated for the sole reason that it was not questioned or challenged until the fifteenth century. Manning relied on an argument from the silence that prevailed until the fifteenth century. Dollinger, on the contrary, basing on the same silence developed another line of argument. He held that the lack of explicit evidence would point to the fact that such a doctrine was alien to the primitive Church; he attributed the emergence of this doctrine to the pseudo-Isidorian decretals of the ninth century. However, neither of them provide an acceptable theory about the origin of papal infallibility. Moreover, the early scholastic theology also did not include the treatise on the Church (Ecclesiology) as one of the provinces in Dogmatic theology.

Tierney rejects these two lines of arguments as untenable. Furthermore, since Tierney disagrees with Döllinger's assumption that the medieval canonists originated the doctrine of papal infallibility in their commentaries on the Isidorian forgeries, he begins his historical study by analysing the teachings of the medieval canonists and concludes by establishing the origin of such a doctrine to a later period than what was claimed by Döllinger.

The canonists

Tierney establishes in the first place that the medieval canonists never held a doctrine of papal infallibility and irreformability. The canonists held the Pope as the supreme legislator and legitimate judge of cases involving disputed questions of faith; but did not attribute to the Pope certain authority which would make him a source of an "extra-scriptural doctrine". The Pope as the supreme judge had power over the disciplinary customs and man-made laws but not over matters of faith and the authority of Scripture. Thus, the canonists never supported any two-source theory or "extra-biblical truths". They made a distinction between an erring pope and the unerring community of the Church. They held the indefectibility of the Church, never the infallibility of the Pope. Historically, even when the Pope erred the Church is preserved in its faith. They attributed inerrancy and indefectibility to the universal Church, not to any individual person.

Moreover, the modern idea that the Pope possessed the supreme magisterium, which is associated with the "keys" promised in Mt 16:19, was alien to the medieval canonists according to whom the "key of knowldge" does not confer any infallible teaching authority on the Pope. They associated this promise with the juridical power of the Pope, not with any teaching authority. The definitive pronouncements of the Pope carry weight because of his possession of the power to judge, not because he is immune from error. In this case, even when a pope errs, he is bound to correct himself, or his doctrine is to be corrected by his successor, before the whole Church is led astray. They never held that the key of knowledge is conferred on the public authority of papacy but restricted their discussions within the realm of binding and loosing in the sacrament of penance.

Because a Pope could err, the canonists maintained that the General Council is superior to the Pope. The canons of a council have more weight as a guide to the truths of faith because of the consensus of the whole Church. When the canonists spoke of the early councils, they emphasized the consensus of the ages, that is, the continuing assent of the

Church throughout the centuries. It is this continuity, not the consent of a specific group at a particular time and place, that gave authority to the canons of the Councils. But later, under the influence of the Roman Corporation Law, the canonists changed their position and held that all faithful christians should be represented at Councils where matters concerning faith would be discussed. Thus, they substituted the consensus of the ages with the consent of a corporation. Furthermore, the canonists failed in their attempt towards a harmonious synthesis of the two traditions reflected in the texts of Gratian's Decretum – the unique authority of the Pope and the unfailing corporate life of the christian community. This provided scope for later extreme papalists and extreme conciliarists to develop their arguments. However, the decretists argued that neither the Pope nor the General Council could give any extra-biblical truths of faith. Insofar as the dogmatic decrees are based on the scriptural truths, they are immutable; still, the disciplinary laws are subject to change according to the signs of the times. The Pope is bound by the pronouncements concerning the truths of faith. Tierney sounds a note of caution when he says that a General Council is superior to the Pope in matters of faith, lest it should lead to conciliarism – a council to be legitimate, it should be convoked and presided over by the Pope; a Council which had intrinsically superior authority to that of the Pope in matters of faith includes the Pope as well; when the decretists spoke of Council they had in mind the eight Councils as listed by Gratian, of which the first four are of great importance – Nicea Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. Those Councils carry weight and authority because of their antiquity and proximity to the Christ event. In short, the canonists never had in mind an unerring Pope, in matters of faith.

Just as the canonists did not admit any papal infallibility, so too they did not teach any doctrine of irreformability. The decretists held that the Pope is not bound by any doctrinal pronouncement of his predecessor except the doctrinal pronouncements enunciated by the General Councils, and the biblical truths and articles of faith. The canonists maintained this position because of their notion of sovereignty. It is the

character of sovereignty that a ruler is not bound by his predecessors' decrees.

In short, the medieval decretists maintained a doctrine that attributed inerrancy or indefectibility not to any individual person but to the universal Church; no canonist raised a question of an unerring Pope. The canonists did not argue on the necessity of an infallible head to sustain the faith of the Church. But they maintained that however badly the head might commit blunders in matter of faith the universal Church would be safeguarded from going astray by virtue of the promise of Jesus (Lk. 22:32) given to the Church. It is also to be noted that the medieval canonist, knew nothing of the discrimination between official infallible pronouncements and official non-infallible pronouncements as understood by the modern catholic theologians.

The emergence of the novel teaching

The disputes between the Franciscan Mendicants and the Masters of Paris University, transforming the disciplinary problems into theological issues, served as the transitional period between the doctrines of the canonists and the doctrine of papal infallibility. The controversial discussions were held on three issues - Franciscan Joachimism, Papal privileges conferred on the Franciscans, and the new teaching on the absolute poverty of Jesus and the Apostles.

Joachim of Flora developed a "Trinitarian theory of history which divided the history into three epochs after the manner of the three persons in the Trinity, the age of the Father corresponding to the Old Testament, the age of the Son corresponding to the New Testament, and the age of the Holy Spirit which was yet to be inaugurated as has been prophesied in the Apocalypse. He also envisaged the emergence of a New Order in the new era. Joachim wanted to emphasize the radical, spiritual renewal of the Church in the age to come. Later on, the Franciscans identified this Joachimite message with the New Gospel mentioned in Rev. 14:6, and went on to teach that the sixth angel of the sixth seal had appeared in the person of St. Francis of Assisi and that the new era had dawned

with the emergence of the Franciscan Order. The Secular Masters agreed that the last days had dawned, but identified the Franciscans as the anti-Christs. They accused the Franciscans of undermining the pastoral activity in the Church, by their claim.

Above all, the most stringent refutation came when the Popes granted privileges to the Franciscans. annulling the testimony of St. Francis of Assisi which forbade the Franciscans from aspiring for papal privileges. The Secular Masters claimed that the Friars were destroying the divinely established structure of three categories - Peter (Pope), the Apostles (Bishops), and the disciples (Parish Priests). Thus the disciplinary and pastoral problems were diverted into theological issues on the Apostolic hierarchy.

The doctrine of absolute poverty of Christ and the Apostles, the imitation of which was propagated as the essential way of perfection, also gave rise to several theological disputes. The Franciscans maintained that Jesus and the Apostles practised absolute poverty both collectively and individually, and that they were the true followers of Jesus in their pursuit of christian perfection. The main charge against the Franciscans was that they invented a novel doctrine of absolute poverty as a pre-requisite to attain the peak of christian perfection, which had no solid basis either in Scripture or in the canons of the Councils or in the writings of the Fathers. The essence of the Franciscan absolute poverty consisted in this that they could "have" certain necessities without, however, "appropriating" them. This was later distinguished as 'poor use of things' and 'property right'.

The Franciscans under the leadership of St. Bonaventure developed a thesis in defence of their position against their adversaries. Bonaventure developed a thesis maintaining that the current teaching of the Church could provide firm and unerring guidance to the truths of faith, even though they do not come from antiquity. He had to attribute to the non-Scriptural traditions the same validity as that of Scripture, thus sowing the seeds for the two-source theory of revelation. Bonaventure propounded a theory of "Development of Doc-

trine" in support of his arguments. Even though Christ has revealed fully, the whole of its truth was lost sight of. The apprehension of this truth is a slow process which has reached its peak in his own time. According to him, St. Francis of Assisi brought a new revelation concerning the essence of christian perfection, and the future of the Church would depend on the acceptance or rejection of this revelation. When Pope Gregory IX clarified the Franciscan rule by introducing the phrase "singly and in common". Bonaventure safeguarded the papel magisterium and the papal sovereignty in order to appropriate the papal teaching as the teaching of their Founder. Bonaventure serves here as a transitional figure between the canonists who stressed the papal sovereignty, and Olivi who emphasized the papal magisterium.

Eventually, the notion of papal infallibility was conceived and propagated by Pietro Olivi (1248–1298), an enigmatic figure, in the course of the complex disputes on the question of Franciscan poverty during the second half of the thirteenth century. Olivi was also influenced by the Joachimite understanding of history and the identification of St. Francis of Assisi with the sixth angel who inaugurated the new era. Besides, Olivi's attitude towards the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and the subsequent approval of that teaching by the pope too influenced him.

During the time of Olivi there was the internal conflict and controversy regarding the nature of poverty within the Franciscan Order – between the *Community* who taught that it was enough to renounce the property right, and the *Spirituals* who propagated 'poor use of things' also as the authentic essence of apostolic poverty. The 'Community' wanted to introduce relaxations into the strict rule in order to provide more flexibility in the services of the universal Church and the papacy; the 'Spirituals' wanted to adhere rigorously to the original ideal of their Founder, namely the ideal of poverty. Olivi led the Spirituals. When the Pope supported Olivi's position as the divinely revealed doctrine for christian perfection, Olivi could do nothing but support the Pope's affirmation. Thus the immediate incentive which made him enthusiastic in

formulating the doctrine of papal infallibility was the promulgation of the Bull *Exiit* by Nicholas III in August, 1279, authorizing his teachings on the essence of apostolic poverty.

Olivi's whole position is based on his threefold assumption: progressive revelation in which the inner meaning of the gospel truths become perfectly comprehensible; the imortance of Francis of Assisi (that is, the private revelation); and, the need for the papal magisterium to authenticate the new revelations. Olivi held that the private revelations are granted as guides to facilitate the comprehensive understanding of the truths contained in the Sacred Scripture and that the Pope cannot dispense with any such interpretation, more particularly the teaching of St. Francis of Assisi. The novel teaching of Olivi lies in this that he affirmed the papal infallibility by appending the phrase "in faith and morals". Furthermore Olivi held that the definitions of individual Popes could become part of the authentic dogma, and consequently have a binding force on the future popes. In other words, Olivi propounded a theory of irreformability of doctrines. This was contrary to the position held by the canonists and St. Bonaventure: the latter served as the transitional figure between the canonists and Olivi, as stated earlier, by attempting to safeguard the Franciscan teaching on poverty without however developing any theory of papal infallibility of doctrines and irreformability of doctrines enunciated by a pope. This doctrinal evolution motivated by Olivi's enthusiasm to safeguard his teachings shows how the juridical power of the pope, as claimed by the canonists was manipulated to suit the convenience of certain people - when the pope decided on the disputed issue as the legitimate judge, those, whose position was authenticated, developed the doctrine of irreformability thus restricting the power of the future popes.

Furthermore, Olivi also prophesied the emergence of a pseudo-pope who would denounce the Franciscan teaching on the apostolic poverty and delude the whole world. He made a distinction between the authentic pope, and a pseudo-pope, which the canonists did not envisage because their doctrine of sovereignty suggested that "an equal has no power over an equal". According to the canonists, a pope does not become a

pseudo-pope by taking a line different from that of his prede-
cessors. It should be noted that it is because of this distinction
that Olivi could not imagine how an unerring Church could be
united to an erring head. According to Olivi, the pope who
errs cannot be regarded as the true head of the Church. The
criterion for judging whether one is an authentic head or a
heretic, is the adherence to the teachings of his predecessor:
because the teachings of the genuine pontiff are infallible.
This conception of the pseudo-pope who would seek to
pervert the faith of the Church, particularly the teaching
concerning Franciscan poverty, stimulated Olivi to invent a
theory of papal infallibility. It should be observed carefully,
however, that what Olivi intended by propounding the doctrines
of papal infallibility and irreformability of the papal decrees
was to restrict the exercise of papal power, and not to increase
the free exercise of the papal power.

The aftermath

Even though this theory was propounded by Olivi in the
thirteenth century, this was neither accepted nor criticized by
the theologians. They tended to regard this theory as a mere
outcome of the eccentricity of an individual. In the meantime,
certain theologians while attempting to deal with this problem
reached the verge of affirming papal infallibility, but turned
away from it. Besides, the theories of Conciliarism, anti-Conci-
liarism too developed while the Franciscans attempted to esta-
blish, in the anonymous treatise *De Perfectione Statuum*, the
Franciscan supremacy over the episcopacy and in a sense,
the servitude of the papacy to the Friars.

This treatise distinguishes between the two states as
instituted by Christ. Christ gave power to the Apostles first to
preach and then to govern the flock. But in the post-Apostolic
era, these roles are separated; the role of preaching is assigned
to the Friars while the role of governing (prelacy) is given to
the Bishops. Bishops have nothing to do but to administer the
sacrament and live a luxurious life. In other words, while the
Friars carried on the evangelical work of Christ, the bishops
performed the routine administration by supervising the external
3

observances required by the Church. This cuts at the very root of the traditional concept that the Bishops are the principal bearers of the ecclesiastical tradition. Thus this treatise attempted to downgrade the role of episcopacy. In short, this treatise claims that the Friars are the true successors of the Apostles who are to transmit the true Christian heritage. The duty of the Pope was to endow the Franciscans with as many privileges as possible by putting the needs and interests of the Friars before those of the Prelates. "His (the author of the treatise) real thought seems to have been that the papacy existed to serve Franciscans and not vice-versa." (p. 168)

Ultimately, the dispute over the nature of papal infallibility re-surfaced with the advent of Pope John XXII who wanted to revoke his predecessor's decree *Exiit*, which authenticated the Franciscan doctrine of Apostolic poverty. Incidentally, according to the Franciscans, the pseudo Pope envisaged by Olivi was incarnated in the person of John XXII who, being brought up in the canonist tradition, wanted to return to the canonist tradition about the papal power. When he revived the theological dispute concerning the issue on the nature of the apostolic poverty and invited the Franciscans for an open discussion, the Franciscans resented this and rose against him. They convoked a General Chapter at Perugia where they reasserted their doctrines – infallibility of the true pope, irreformability of the definition of the doctrine of apostolic poverty, and revived and reasserted the doctrines of Olivi. At this juncture John XXII, as a canonist, claimed that the pope should be either an infallible teacher or a sovereign ruler, and opted to be a sovereign ruler. He exercised his sovereignty by promulgating a decree *Cum inter nonnullos*. This act on the part of the Pontiff led the Franciscans to prove John a heretic by returning to Olivi's concept of a pseudo-Pope. They denounced the Pope as a heretic and affirmed the infallibility of the true pope by issuing the Sachsenhausen Appeal on May 24, 1324. They developed a novel theory of the "key of knowledge", in support of their doctrine of papal infallibility. They argued that when Jesus promised the keys, he conferred on them the power to formulate unerring pronouncements. This was a great theological breakthrough. But

John XXII condemned this theory as there is no basis for it either in the theological or the canonistical tradition. This again shows how the break between the Franciscans and the Papacy of the fourteenth century, and their attempt to restrict the papal power of the Pope at that time gave rise to such a doctrine.

In spite of the condemnation of the Sachsenhausen Appeal by the Pontiff this theory was upheld, particularly, by William of Ockham. He set out to defend the theory of the "key of knowledge" as interpreted in the Appeal, and to provide a broader basis to infallibility. He denounced the old idea of papal sovereignty and attempted to prove John XXII a heretic. Ockham insisted on the infallibility of the Church and the irreformability of the papal decrees on matters relating to faith. His concern over ecclesiology grew out of the historical situations of his time. He was convinced that a Pope could err and, that the reigning Pope did. Hence he set out to argue that the authentic papal documents were immutable. He also argued that both the keys - key of knowledge and key of power – should be entrusted simultaneously to a single head if he was to promulgate immutable decrees. Hence, if a theologian believes that a true Pope is infallible and that the current Pope has erred in a solemn official pronouncement concerning faith and morals, then the theologian has no alternative but to denounce the Pope as a heretic.

At the same time, Guido Terreni, a contemporary of William of Ockham, paved the way more explicitly for the definition of Papal Infallibility. He did this when he attempted to refute William of Ockham and defend Pope John XXII. Terreni agreed with Ockham when he said that the use of both keys was essential to render the papal decrees authoritative. Thus, Terreni disagreed with the Pope, whom he defended. Furthermore, Terreni insisted that the whole power of the Church was conferred on the Pope, while establishing a distinction between the Pope's public pronouncements and his private opinions. Basing on the assurance of Jesus (Lk. 22:32), Terreni argued that Peter and his successors would never err in making public pronouncements. He believed in a certain

preventive grace that would keep even a heretical Pope from erring in his public pronouncements. Terreni defended the papal infallibility against the Franciscans by refuting the concept of the Joachimite world of a new era where only the Friars would govern the Church, and by establishing against the Conciliarists that Jesus himself established the institutional, hierarchical Church of which Peter was made the head, and subsequently his successors.

These theories of papal infallibility which originated at the end of the thirteenth century were not adopted by all the theologians. However, the theory of papal infallibility came to be widely accepted among the Roman theologians who found it necessary to revive this as an effective means to refute the Conciliarism and Gallicanism, and the theory of the "sola scriptura" of the Protestants during the seventeenth century. This was mainly upheld by the Ultramontanist theologians, thus providing a basis for the final definition of this doctrine.

Conclusion

Given this historical development of the doctrine of papal infallibility, it is evident that there has been no continuity or gradual unfolding of the a truth – here, papal infallibility - as has been claimed; rather a change which took place in the Church's teaching. This theory was invented by the medieval Franciscan theologians to suit their convenience and was later adopted by the Church to suit her convenience in refuting anti-papal theories. This doctrine formed no part of the ancient christian faith as no convincing evidence can be detected in the theological and canonical traditions before the thirteenth century. This is an invention motivated by pragmatic reasons.

Moreover, those who propounded this theory in the thirteenth century intended to restrict the power of the Pope and not to give him absolute sovereignty. Tierney's personal contribution, as a historian, lies in the fact that he takes the reader back to the historical situations that have given rise to the origin of papal infallibility and irreformability of the pontifical decrees. The evolution of this theory was helped) y

the Joachimite fantasy, the aberrations within the Franciscan Order, and the ralationship between the Friars and the Papacy. Thus any theologizing on any issue, particularly the disputed issues should take into account the historical situations which generated those issues. Theologians cannot overlook the historical evidence in their theological disputes.

After tracing and stating in clear terms the history behind this disputed issue, and after making the point that this theory has no solid foundation to build upon, Tierney rightly concludes: "The doctrine of papal infallibility no longer serves anyone's convenience – least of all the Pope's. The papacy adopted the doctrine out of weakness. Perhaps one day the church will feel strong enough to renounce it." (p.281)

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A Question about the Infallibility of the Church

Introduction

After the shock caused by the presentation of a paper on "Authority, Freedom and Responsibility in the Indian Church" at a conference of bishops and theologians, there followed protracted discussions on freedom in the Church, on decision-making etc. In order to ease the confusion in many minds still lingering on, including that of his own, one of the theologians read out a certain statement from a document of Vatican II almost to the effect that the Spirit subjects himself to the Church. Immediately there were signs of relief on the faces of many and even looks of triumph, which soon died out when it was found that the read-out statement formed but a part of a whole that had no such import. The mentality

evinced by the theologian was typical of the attitude of the official Church and he did eventually become a bishop.

A. Uncritical attitude

We believe that the Church, because of its divine origin and the divine promise, will last 'always to the end of time'. May be, certain reforms and modifications are now and then needed, which the (official) Church can well afford to make without, however, affecting itself considerably. But radical change of attitudes and structures, No. *This kind* of sense of security and self-assurance, of implicit trust in the Church's indefectibility and infallibility had been fairly apparent. till Vatican II, in almost all the sayings and doings of its ministers from top to bottom and in the understanding and submission of the simple faithful. Strange interpretations of certain Gospel texts confirmed such an attitude. Mt 18:18. for instance. viz. "I solemnly tell you that whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven", was taken to mean that all the decisions of the (official) Church had the approval of heaven. In fact, there is no question here of heaven approving the Church's decisions. The Church on earth is the servant of the Kingdom and has to carry out heaven's decisions, com- municated by the Spirit. Similarly with Lk 10:16 – "Whoever listens to you listens to me": choices of men in authority were most often identified with God's will. A few instances are given below wherein this attitude is more or less apparent.

1. Authority

Authority has been taking bizarre shapes in the Church down the centuries. The secular power proved too strong for the ministers of the Church to resist, though Jesus had warned them against it very strongly and seriously: "You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them and their great men make their authority felt. This must not happen among you, No."[1] But once it took possession of them,

1. Mt 20 : 25-26; Mk 10 : 42-43; Lk 22 : 25-26. cf. my article: "Authority and its Exercise" in *Jeevadhara* 58, pp. 286-301.

it could hardly be shaken of and its victims invariably resorted to all sorts of rationalization for retaining it. Now, can Rome think of a Church without its *present* hierarchical set-up? without its present central control? without its present mode of decision-making ? without the present ordination of its ministries ? Many catholics naively think that this is how Jesus instituted the Church. But how it all happened is writ large on the pages of history. The present authority evidently bears the stamp of Roman imperialism, though its direct opposite Jesus demanded of his disciples: "Any one who wants to be great among you must be your slave."[2] Peter was the first among the Apostles and so he had to be the last – 'as the one who serves'. It is interesting to note how he exercised his authority in the election of Mathias[3], in the appointment of seven deacons[4], and in the so called Jerusalem Council[5]. Here he is never seen to have taken a decision himself. As the president, of course, he introduces the matter, proposes the problem, takes cognizance of the situation. The decisions, however, were taken not by Peter alone, not even by the Twelve, but by the community of the brethren[6]. A papalist would say: Well, he should have taken the decision alone and thus saved many inconveniences and embarrassments. But Peter knew better. He was convinced that the Church was a real brotherhood – a community of the children of God, as he witnessed the out-pouring of the Spirit on them all.

But his successors eventually became monarchs in the Church, and the planning and execution of the monarchy have been and are still exercised mostly through, or rather, by the Roman Curia. The Pope is said to form a *Collegium* with the bishops all the world over, and the Synod of Bishops was meant to be the first phase, after Vatican II, of putting into practice its doctrine of collegiality. But the Synod remains only a consultative body. Again, the Church is (said to be)

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2. Mt 20: 26-28. cf. Mk 10: 43-45 & Lk 22: 26-27.
3. Acts 1: 15-26.
4. *id.* 6: 1-6.
5. *id.* 15: 6-29.
6. *id.* 1: 15, 23, 26; 6: 5; 15: 22-23.

the union of (local) Churches with their own autonomies. But the latter are much the same as provinces of the Roman Church. Now, what has been said of the central authority in the Church is true also of the bishops, as far as centralization and decision-making, in their own limited spheres, are concerned. Latin America is an exception, where some of the bishops show the way and share with the poor and the suffering millions. There a redeeming feature is clearly revealed in its innumerable 'basic ecclesial communities'. Even these manifestations of the Spirit, as the bishops themselves testify, were frowned upon and there have been schemings to control them and bring them into line.

It may, especially, be noted that in making the above observations or those that follow, no malice or motive is imputed to anyone, nor are we blind to the immense good papacy has been doing to the Church as well as to the world at large by its benign influence and power. It is a certain 'mystique' of infallibility of the Church that works the mischief: 'The authority in the Church is not delegated by the community of believers but coming from God'. Hence the believers have no option but to obey, nor would they be led astray. Those who are under this spell will have no room left for even a suspicion of the authority going wrong. Only when completely disillusioned, will one be forced to do, as Paul did.[7]

A word about *Foreign Funding Agencies* may not be out of place here. Those of the Agencies who give large amounts of money to Third World Churches, *only* on the recommendations of the bishops, are doing more harm than good. First, they are perpetuating the above aberrations of authority and structure in the Church and indirectly thrusting such Western models upon the Churches of the Third World; secondly, they are thereby putting a premium on institutions, or rather, institutionalism with its concomitant evils; thirdly, they care precious little for prophecy or other charisms which promote Church renewal. They must know that no attempts at reform that go counter to the interests of the authorities would be recomm-

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7. Gal 2: 11.

ended by them nor was there ever a prophet who had not been a headache to the establishment. Yet the Funding Agencies cannot be blamed as they are also under the spell of the mystique of infallibility of the Church.

2. Good News to the poor

How central is this theme in the proclamation of Jesus is evident from the Gospels. Jesus inaugurates his public ministry with the affirmation that the prophecy of Isaiah, viz. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor"[8]. "has been fulfilled in your hearing"[9]. that is, at the very time when those in the synagogue at Nazareth were listening to his words. The first three beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount conveys this good news to the poor.[10] Again, in answer to the disciples of John the Baptist, enquiring about Jesus' identity, he points out the fulfilment, then and there, of the promises concerning the Messianic era – that "the poor have the good news preached to them".[11]

Gospel to the poor will be incomplete and unfulfilled as long as their liberation remains merely spiritual. It is true that the salvation Jesus proclaimed is eschatological, but beginning here and now, affecting the whole man and everyman, leading to the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressors, removing injustice and oppression. My preaching the good news to the poor would sound hollow if I do not choose to be with them and stand up for their cause, as Jesus did. He struck at the root of the evil when he overthrew a religion of external laws and observances, of human authority and conformism, which held the poor in fetters in all the spheres of life, spiritual, economic and socio-political. The evils of injustice, dependence and oppression, embedded in the social structures, are the root cause of poverty and unless a structural redemp-

8.   61 : 1.
9.   Lk 4: 21.
10.   Mt 5: 3-4, 6; Lk 6: 20-21.
11.   Mt 11:6; Lk 7: 22 cf. ' Jesus' Good News to the Poor" by George Mangatt in *Jeevadhara* 16, pp. 300-317.

tion is brought about, good news to the poor will remain unreal and incomplete, whatever relief works are undertaken in their regard. (Still the wonderful works of service to the poor and the needy throughout the world down the centuries stand to the Church's credit.)

It is here that the authority in the Church, for centuries, failed seriously. An authority built upon a feudalistic or totalitarian basis like that of a state, against the Gospel directive, could hardly denounce the structures of unfreedom in the society, unless it came out of its own. More often than not, such structures had been legitimized or supported by silence and leanings rather than by positive statements. However, affirmations like the following had not been wanting: "In the order of human society, as established by God, there are rulers and ruled, employers and employed, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, nobility and the proletariat".[12] 'As it was an order established by God' (mark the mystique), what could the Church do but to exhort one to be just and kind to the other and this other to be resigned to the prevailing order however unjust and oppressive! But here it must be acknowledged that, despite all this, most of the recent Popes, beginning with Leo XIII, and II Vatican Council have been forthright in proclaiming the liberation of the poor through their teachings.

3. Liturgy

It seems to me that the nature and extent of control exercised by Church authority are most revealing in the Liturgy where angels fear to tread. Liturgy is the 'act of the people', their communing with God, their 'worship of the Father in Spirit and truth'.[13] Here there is absolutely no place for any one to dictate; nor is there any need for anybody else's approval. Jesus is our only mediator in whom we have direct access to the Father. No body should be allowed to usurp his place. But presidents, of course, in a common act, animators, inspirers, no more than that.

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12. *All Things in Christ*: Encyclicals and Selected Documents of Saint Pius X, 1954, quoted in *Jeevadhara* 63 p. 216.
13, Jn 4: 23.

The worship of the Father will be different from people to people, from place to place, from age to age. But we know what had been going on in the Church before Vatican II. You had to lip, in the way you were shown, the very words put into your month, no matter whether they were stereotyped formulas couched in unknown language, past repeating or even irrelevant. Times have changed. People have matured. But the Liturgy remains much the same. There is hardly any use arguing that Jesus was so simple, so informal, unceremonious, true to life in the institution/celebration of the Eucharist: "And as they were eating he took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them and said 'Take: this is my body'. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them... 'This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many".[14] Jesus chose a very solemn occasion for the institution of the Eucharist – the night he was betrayed – in order to show its deep significance as well as its intimate relation to his death on the cross for our love. For the rest, it was quite an ordinary occasion - 'as they were eating' their supper.[15] In the course of it he took bread (from what was just served on the table); similarly a cup (of the drink that was served). The evangelists do not care to give any details of the bread and the drink. Then again, we are left in the dark whether the archtraitor Judas was excluded from participating in the Eucharist [16] Anyway, the evangelists do not make a fuss about it at all.

What Jesus said about the sabbath is all the more true of the Eucharist – of the Liturgy as a whole: 'It is made for

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14. Mk 14: 22-24.

15. We are not sure that this supper was exactly the same as the paschal meal of the Jews or that it was on the eve of their Passover. Cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*. The Anchor Bible 29A Doubleday, 1970, pp. 555-556.

16. The warning about the betrayal occurs before the institution of the Eucharist in Mk 14: 17-21 & Mt 26: 20–25, while in Lk 22: 22-23 it occurs after it. Though John makes no mention of the institution, according to some authors, the 'morsel' (*Psōmion*), in Jn 13: 26, which Jesus is said to have given Judas after 'dipping it' in the dish and by which the traitor was identified, was eucharistic. Cf. *op. cit.* pp. 574-575.

humans and not the other way'. But the ministers of the Church, who are said to represent Jesus, would have it the other way. Besides, they would draw details of everything, frame innumerable rules and rubrics, fix and freeze prayers for all times so much so that the Liturgy is shorn of all relevance to actual life.

But the mystique of infallibility stands by you with the comforting words: It is the prayer of the Church. Whether you understand it or not, it will have its efficacy and, if sacraments, *ex opere operato*. The celebrants represent Jesus, almost identical with him. All that you need is to do what you are told and you will have your share of the fruit!

4. Canon Law

It is surprising to see that what Jesus strongly denounced in the Gospel has come to stay in the Church, viz. pharisaism, the extreme legalism of the pharisees. Jesus wanted the life and strength of his Church to derive from love and not from law[17], from service and not from power and jurisdiction[18]. The Church is a brotherhood[19] and all laws and commandments are summed up and fulfilled in the commandment of love.[20]

Jesus exempted his disciples from the law of fasting[21] and excused them for breaking the rules of the sabbath.[22] He himself did not mind breaking them whenever they stood in the way of his doing good to the people.[23] Was it not also a challenge to the structures of oppression?[24] He has thus rendered his 'yoke easy' and his 'burden light'.[25]

17. Jn 13: 34-35.
18. *ib.* 13: 14-15.
19. Mt 23:8.
20. Lk. 10: 25-28; Mt 7:12.
21. Mt 9: 14-15.
22. *id.* 12: 1-8.
23. Mk 3: 2-5; Mt 12: 9-14; Lk 13: 10-17; Jn 5: 6-10; 9: 6-15.
24. Cf. Mt 23: 4.
25. Mt 11: 30.

It is the pharisees who lay, on the shoulders of the people, heavy burdens which they themselves would not move with their fingers. The Church too has many laws for ordering, or rather, controlling the lives of the members, even purporting to bind them under sin. Canon Law once formed an important branch of seminary studies. Canonists enjoyed great respect and were very much sought after. They went hoary, vying with one another in interpreting the letter of the law, and people were all ears to hear their verdict. Today the situation has changed except perhaps in official circles. Are all the laws, norms and traditions based on the Gospel? If not, why should they stay? Why should they be borne? Why should we waste our energy on them? They are unnecessary burdens. All of them, unless sprung from love, unless they are expressions of the inner promptings of the Spirit, are a blot and an insult to our being as sons and daughters of God.

But the mystique of infallibility would have it otherwise: Whatever the authorities in the Church bind on earth will be bound in heaven and only they can loose it so that it be loosed in heaven!

5. Conscience and personal freedom

Jesus came to liberate humankind and not to bind them. He poured into our hearts his Spirit and his love the fruit of which is the liberty of the children of God. God's children are free from all compulsion and constraint. It is love in the Holy Spirit that is the source and norm and inspiration of their life and action. That is why Paul 'set love sharply against the law and trusted Christians to live freely in love'.[26] I Cor 13: 4-7 shows clearly how much more demanding is love than any code of (canon) law: "Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous, never boastful or conceited; never rude or selfish; it does not take offence and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins, but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes." "The Christian ethic is Ethics Part II. Other

26. Michels, Florence, *Paul and the Law of Love*, Milwaukee, 1967, quoted in *Jeevadhara* 15, p. 231.

systems distinguish what is right from what is wrong: Jesus distinguishes what is good from what is merely right... Duty is not enough. Duty obeys the rules, but love grasps opportunities. Duty acts under constraint, love is spontaneous and therefore gracious. Duty expects to be recompensed or at least recognized, love expects nothing in return. To love like that is to be sons of the Most High".[27] Love will not make you remain idle, but will drive you to action, will make you open out to God in faith and to your fellow beings in service to the extent of self-forgetting and, if need be, of total self-giving and self-sacrifice. This is what the liberty of the children of God is for, before which your strictest laws pale and most stringent prescriptions falter.

The mystique of infallibility has it that these are high ideals to which all are not called. As the vast majority are ordinary mortals, the infallible Church has prepared for them a minimum program - a common-sense ethics. Don't make fuss about your liberty; abide by the Church's directions and you will be saved How much easier is it! How much lesser your responsibility! But if you don't, you will have to bear the consequences, mind you.

All could not be cowed to such submission and confor-mism. Numberless men and women, for the sake of their freedom of conscience, had to languish in prison or to go into exile or to be burnt at the stake. Vatican II made a humble and magnanimous gesture of penitent confession of past sins, direct or indirect - the first official avowal, perhaps, in the whole history of the Church: "In the life of the people of God as it has made its pilgrimage through the vicissitudes of history there have at times appeared ways of acting which were *less in accord with the spirit of the Gospel and even opposed to it.*[28] (italics mine)

27. G. B. Caird *Saint Luke,* Penguin Books, 1663, p 104-5.
28. D. H., art. 12. Recent moves by the Roman Curia seem to belie this confession and teachings (cf. G. S., art. 16, 62; L. G., art. 37 etc) of Vatican II. For instance, Roman involvements in the Latin American Bishops Conference at Puebla, in the Synod of Dutch Bishops arranged in Rome and in the measures meted out to theologians who exercised their 'freedom of enquiry, of thought and expression' (G. S., art. 62).

B. The question

Now is the most opportune time for raising the question that forms the title of this article: May a Church (I am speaking in general, not about any Church in particular) which is guilty of ways of acting opposed to the Gospel be sure of Jesus' presence with it? To put it another way, may a Church that does not choose to be always with Jesus, expect him to be with it 'always to the end of time' [29] ? Is not the New Covenant bilateral or is it a guarantee of God's favour, no matter whether the Church remains unfaithful ? In other words, would it not be presumptuous for such a Church to glory in its indefectibility and infallibility ?

This question is not meant to be a theoretical one and so there is no use finding arguments against it nor, however, may it ever be evaded. It is for our continuous repentance and conversion. The Israelites believed in God's covenant with them: 'I will be their God and they shall be my people.'' But as often as they turned unfaithful the prophets of old pulled them up and urged them on to repentance. Covenants, both Old and New. temporal and eternal, are always bilateral and so we have to be all the more humble and vigilant. Hence the important question is whether *we* choose to be always with God - ever faithful to Him, and not whether God will be faithful to the covenant He has made with us. If, however, we choose to be unfaithful, God will still be with us, but perhaps as judge and not as saviour.

Conclusion

A word about the intimate relation between doctrine and life, preaching and practice, love and the interpretation of Scripture seems to fit in here as conclusion. It is a psychological principle that 'one knows only so much as one does'. Those who are used to the dichotomy of preaching one thing and practising another may take it for an exaggeration. But it is Jesus who said that "he who does them (commandments) and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of

29. Mt 28: 20.

heaven", otherwise not. [30]   Hence ' By this we may be sure
that we know him (God), if we keep his commandments. He
who says, 'I know him' but disobeys his commandments, is a
liar and the truth is not in him". [31]   Paul declares that the
tongues of men and of angels, all prophecies, all knowledge
and understanding of mysteries and all faith are nothing if
they are devoid of love. [32]   Hence right living - true loving is
essential to the correct interpretation of Scripture; without love
mental sight will be impaired, perspective lost and wrong em-
phasis given. Is this not the right course to take in order to
serve the cause of infallibility ?

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30.   Mt 5: 19.
31.   I Jn 2: 3–4.
32.   Cf. I Cor 13: 1-3.

Infallibility of the Church - an Oriental Orthodox Understanding

Nature of the Church

Infallibility of the Church has never been a theological issue in the East. In order to clarify this statement further, we should have some idea of how the Orthodox Tradition understands the Church itself. It is rather difficult to speak about a 'concept' of the Church precisely because the Church's self-understanding can never be conceptualized. The universal Christian Tradition spoke about the 'mystery of the Church', though in our time everything that does not nearly fit into our logically structured conceptual categories smacks of superstition and unscientific obscurantism. However, the Church continues to speak in St. Paul's words: 'This is a great mystery and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church'' (Eph. 5:32).

The Eastern tradition is rather unwilling to divide the Church into 'visible' and 'invisible' churches, or 'church militant' and church triumphant', though sometimes these terms appear in theological works. The central idea of the church as the body of Christ provides a rather holistic approach in which the totality of the great created community of God which transcends time and space is taken into account. This community includes saints and sinners, the living and the departed, humans and angels, past and future. The Church as the body of Christ shares the total, all–inclusive presence of Christ the Logos, the head of this community. Therefore, visibility and tangibility are not exclusive principles by which one can contemptualize the Church or define its character. As A. Khomiakov, a 19th century Russian theologian puts it in his famous essay on the Church:

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"It is only in the relation to man that it is possible to recognize a division of the Church into visible and invisible; its unity is in reality true and absolute. Those who are alive on earth, those who have finished their earthly course, those who, like the angels, were not created for a life on earth, those in future generations who have not yet begun their earthly course, are all united together in one Church, in one and the same grace of God.... And therefore, when we speak of the 'church visible and invisible' we speak only in relation to man."[1]

Christ being the head and the Holy Spirit being the indweller of the Church, the community of the people of God has no centre of authority or model of unity other than the Holy Trinity itself. No human authority on earth can stand in the place of this ultimate authority which the Trinity represents.

Christ is present in the Church as he had promised to his disciples: 'I am with you always, even to the end of the world' (Mt 28 : 20). Wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, he is present in their midst (Mt 18:20). Timothy Ware refers to a hymn of J. M. Neale speaking of the absent Christ:[2]

> And still the Holy Church is here
> Although her Lord is gone.

This arises from a misunderstanding of the nature of the Church. Though Christ's earthly ministry is over in one sense, he continues to be the head of his body. His continued presence makes the idea of any *vicarious* within the Church superfluous.

Holy Spirit is the indwelling power of the Church. The experience of Pentecost at the origin of the Christian community is sustained in the Church by the Spirit. As Irenaeus puts it, "where the Church is, there is the Spirit, and where the Spirit is, there is the Church".[3]

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1. A. Khomiakov, *The Church is One*, quoted in T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin, Books, 1964 p. 247

2. T. Ware, *Op. cit.* p. 245

3. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III. xxiv. 1.

The Spirit leads the Church to the truth. But neither the Spirit nor the truth are confined to the Church. The Church cannot institutionalize the Spirit and his truth, precisely because the Spirit of God by nature is free. The free Spirit imparts freedom to the community of the Spirit. When this community exercises its freedom in the right way, truth becomes a quality of its life. This quality of truth manifests itself as the Church is moved from within by the Spirit. This quality cannot be objectively reduced to any institution, person or proposition. It is the totality of the body of Christ that manifests the quality of truth.

Nature of authority

Behind the question of infallibility in the Roman Catholic Church lies the question of authority in the Church. The question of authority is equally important to the Orthodox Churches as well. What is the nature of authority? What is the seat of authority? In what way is it expressed? Can the expression of authority go wrong sometimes?

Authority in the true sense belongs to God. Yet the Church recognizes some form of authority granted to it by God since the Church is called upon to participate in the authority of the Son of God. It is an authority vested in the totality of the body of Christ, in the people of God who are called a royal priesthood and a holy nation. No person or group or persons in the Church can approrpriate this authority for himself. Orginally this authority consisted in healing the sick, casting out demons, forgiving the repentent sinner, and declaring the advent of the rule *basileia* of God. The corporate and participatory character of authority in the Church maintains its authenticity. When that authority ceases to be corporate and participatory, it begins to become deformed and unauthentic. Failure, error and self deception are constant possibilities that threaten the authority in the Church.

Seats of authority

According to the Oriental Orthodox understanding there are various seats of authority within the Church; but no one seat is absolute or infallible.

a) *Scripture* is authoritative as the written expression of the primary witness of the Apostolic community to the life, death and resurrection of Christ. This witness in its written form is not isolated from the living Tradition of the Church. There is no question of Scripture and / or Tradition since Scripture represents the integral part and primary witness of the Tradition which is the unbroken life-stream of the Church. It is the same Spirit that indwells and inspires the Church that is behind the writing of the Scripture. What Gregory Nazianzen (4th cent.) expresses concerning Scripture is the Church's belief: "We, on the other hand, trace the careful activity of the Spirit even in the details of the Scripture, and we will never admit (it would not be reverent) that even the least important narratives of Scripture were carefully committed to writing by the chroniclers without some serious purpose."[4] Scriptures have authority, but always within the total Tradition of the Church which continually witnesses to Jesus Christ crucified and risen. It is not considered to be an infallible source of authority in itself.

b) *Councils* are authoritative in the Orthodox Tradition, but contrary to the understanding of many people outside the Orthodox Church, they are not considered to be infallible or absolute in authority. In the Byzantine Orthodox Tradition sometimes one finds a heavy emphasis on ecumenical councils and their decrees as the supreme and unerring seat of authority while for the non-Chalcedonian Orthodox tradition ecumenical council in spite of their great authority do not possess any such character of inerrancy. Hans Küng in his *Infallible*? refers to a difference of opinion even among the Byzantine Orthodox theologians about the status of the ecumenical councils. Referring to the position of J. Karmiris and K. Dyovouniotis, Küng says: It is more than doubtful whether this concentration of the infallibility of the Church in the propositions of an ecumenical council is really the Orthodox position. The emphasis of certain Eastern theologians on conciliar infallibility seems sometimes to be dictated, not so much by their own ancient tradition, as by opposition to the Roman Pontiff and a decision

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4. Gregory of N   anzus, *Oration*, 2. 105

not to fall short of him in the matter of infallibillity".[5] The criticism of Küng is legitimate. An infallible teaching office is unknown to the Eastern tradition in general. As Timothy Ware, another Byzantine Orthodox theologian says, "Councils of bishops can err and be deceived".[6]

The non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches take a more radical position. While holding fast to the conciliar principle and pattern, and not minimizing the significance of the three ecumenical councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Ephesus, they think that the ecumenical councils are not essential for the life of the Church. The non-Chalcedonian Churches have lived since the 5th century without convening any ecumenical council.

Some of the Oriential Orthodox theologians like Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios think that Ecumenical Councils were imperial devices and it is quite natural that the imperial churches of Greek and Latin traditions attach undue importance to them.[7] He has questioned the legitimacy of the notion of the universal Church and universal synodical structure on the basis of the ancient tradition of the local church and its eucharistic centrality. However, the confession of faith as presented in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed is of primary significance to the ancient Oriental Churches. But any fundamentalism whether it be biblical, conciliar or papal is categorically rejected by these churches.

The value of the Council lies in its collegial, corporate and "traditional" character and its final trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit when it takes decisions for the Church. A. Grillmeier in analysing the notion of St. Athanasius about Councils has rightly pointed out that for Athanasius a Council is by nature a *paradosis* or tradition.[8] The Council Fathers

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5. Hans Küng, *Infallible* ? London, 1972, p. 165f.

6. T. Ware, *op. cit.* p. 166

7. Paulos Mar Gregorios, "The Importance of the Councils for the Life of the Universal Church" in *Wort und Warheit*, Dec. 1976, pp 138ff.

8. A. Grillmeier, "The Origins of the Conciliar Idea", in *Wort und Warheit, op. cit.* pp. 108ff.

were handing down the *didaskalia*, the teaching of the Church. The decisions and canons of the Council are in conformity with the total tradition of the Church. For Athanasius the Council of Nicea enjoyed general authority because it was confirming, preserving and continuing the *paradosis* of the Church. Grillmeier remarks that Athanasius never knew any "infallibility" of the Council which is a later concept. However, Athanasius speaks of the "inalterability" of a conciliar decision.[9] A Council can take binding decisions if it can show that it is in accordance with the Scriptures, that it is in agreement with Apostolic teaching and that it is received by the whole *oecumene*. Thus Athanasius does not give any *a priori* infallibility to an ecumenical council, but assesses its significance *a posteriori*.

Also the reception of a Council by the Church is constitutive of its authority. Even in the case of Nicea 325 the Council was not immediately received by the Church in spite of its prestige and imperial support. The consensus of the whole Church was always sought, though not in a formal way, for all decisions taken in the Councils. As S. Bulgakov says, "it does not mean that the decisions of the Councils should be confirmed by a general plebiscite and that without such a plebiscite they have no force. There is no such plebiscite, but from historical experience it clearly appears that the voice of a given council has truly been the voice of the Church or that it has not: that is all".[10]

c) Another seat of authority is the *episcopal office*. However, in the Orthodox tradition a bishop's person and office are not isolated from the rest of the body of Christ. In a Eucharist-centred community the bishop, who is chosen and consecrated by the people of God, is the shepherd and leader. However, he is always a bishop-in-council with the presbyters, deacons and the people. The unity of the Church is manifested when such local bishops-in-council meet around the one Eucharist in one faith and love.[11] This is a wider level of con-

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 118

10. S. Bulgakov, *The Orthdox Church*, quoted in T. Ware, *op. cit.* p. 257-

11. See Paulos Gregorios, *art. cit.* p. 141.

ciliarity which can have local, regional and universal manifest-
ations. The College of Bishops (in communion with the total
body of Christ) witnesses to the Apostolic experience of Christ
crucified and risen. Each local bishop-in-council is successor
to all the Apostles since it is the Apostolic College that matters
and not the individual status of each Apostle. Therefore, the
Orthodox tradition rejects such ideas as Petrine office and
Petrine primacy. Although positions of honour or pre-eminence
are granted to certain bishops for historical reasons without
endangering the basic equality of all bishops, these positions
arc not at all theologically connected to any infallible authority
or universal jurisdiction. As Dr. V. C. Samuel puts it, "the
basis of oriental Orthodoxy is neither the Petrine Office nor
the Apostolic office, but the Christian Community. From their
point of view bishops both individually and collectively, or the
councils with bishops and non-bishops can err, so that those
in the community who feel convinced of the error have the
Christian right and duty to put right the mistake and work for
its eradication".[12] This position is in stark contrast to the
decree of the First Vatican Council when it said that when the
Roman Pontiff speaks *ex cathedra* in virtue of his supreme
Apostolic authority and in virtue of the infallibility in defining
doctrine concerning faith and morals, "such definitions of the
Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not by
virtue of the consent of the Church".

It has been argued that Papal infallibility is not an
infallibilitas personalis et separata because it belongs to him not
as a private person but as a *persona publica*, as the Head of
the Church and that Papal infallibility is not separated from
the infallibility of the Church.[13] In the Orthodox understand-
ing neither the infallibility of a particular bishop nor the in-
fallibility of the Church which simply serves as a cover for the
former is part of the authentic Christian Tradition.

Patriarchs and Catholicoi retain their basic equality
with other bishops though they preside over the episcopal
college in love and with the consent of the whole Church. In
the Orthodox understanding the bishop of Rome is not exempt
in any way from this general consensus of the Church. As the

12. V. C. Samuel, "The First Vatican Council Reviewed
by Oriental Orthodoxy" in *Wort und Warheit*, Dec. 1978,
pp. 117ff.
13. See G. Greschake, "The Bearing of the Decisions of
the First Vatican Council on Papal Primacy" in *Wort und
Warheit*, Dec. 1978, pp. 136ff.

Byzantine Orthodox Patriarchs said in a letter to Pope Pius IX in 1848: "Among us, neither Patriarchs nor councils could ever introduce new teaching, for the guardian of religion is the very body of the Church, that is the people (*laos*) tself." [14]

d) *Decrees and definitions* have authority but they are limited in several ways. In this matter the Orthodox Churches have a very different position from that of the Western tradition. Hans Küng in his work *Infallible* goes to a discussion of the "rationalist origin of the theory of clear propositions as the ideal of knowledge." [15] In his assessment of the place of dogmatic definitions and propositions he comes near to the Orthodox position. Although the Cartesian clarity and distinctness were useful in our scientific development, that cannot always be applied to the expressions of faith.

The Eastern tradition always held that the mystery of God and his Church can never be fully articulated in clear, logical propositions. That is why the Patristic Tradition divided theology into *apophatic* (that which transcends language) and *cataphatic* (that which can be possibly expressed by human language). The Church never puts any absolute trust in dogmatic definitions of faith. Many of the eminent Eastern fathers were extremely reluctant to define and declare the mystery of faith. In the councils they stated and declared certain things, but in a minimum of words and in cases of extreme urgency and necessity. In the 4th century there was a very penetrating debate between the Cappadocians and the Eunomians about the possibilities and non-possibility of language with respect to the articulation of the mystery of God. [16] What emerged from this discussion was not an optimism in the truth content of language, but great reservation with regard to all human expression of divine things. Any idea of infallibility or absolute truthfulness in dogmatic definitions is far from the understanding of the Church whether such definitions are made *ex cathedra* by a head of the Church or an ecumenical council.

The issue of truth

There is a question of truth here. The Orthodox tradition does not understand truth in a static manner. Apprehen-

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14.   Quoted in T. Ware, *op. cit.* p. 255
15.   Hans Küng, *op. cit.* p. 133f.
16.   See in this connection, K. M. George, "An Orthodox Approach to Hermeneutics", in *The Star of the East*, Jan. 1981, pp. 15ff

sion of truth is a dynamic process. It cannot be caught in
propositions and definitions in any infallible and absolute
manner. The clarity and logical consistency of a proposition
does not guarantee its truth content. Truth is a quality that
becomes manifest as the body of Christ lives in the Holy
Spirit. Truthfulness is the character of the Spirit and where-
ver the Spirit works there the quality of truth is manifested.
This does not mean that human language or human definitions
have no value. But language is only one of the innumerable
ways of expressing aspects of truth. In the Orthodox under-
standing, worship and its non verbal celebration through sym-
bolic movements, postures gestures, colours, and sounds are
an important manner of expressing truth. Genuine Christian
love shown to one's fellow human beings is another form of
expressing truth. Mutual trust and selfless sacrifice are still
other forms. These ways of expressing truth are quite different
from the Cartesian understanding of the truth through intellec
tual knowledge based on clear, distinct and articulatable appre-
hensions. Therefore the Orthodox tradition does not accord
any exclusive value to council definitions and other official
ecclesiastical pronouncements as containing infallible truth.

With all this, a final question can be asked. What does
it mean then to affirm on Scriptual authority that the Holy
Spirit leads the Church to all truth as Christ has promised?
What is the significance of the Pauline affirmation that Christ
shall sanctify and cleanse the Church "by the washing of
water with the word that he might present the Church to
himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such
thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:
26, 27). The Pauline statement explains the Lord's promise.
The Church in history is in constant struggle with the powers
of darkness and the gates of hell are facing it out there.
Saints and sinners live together in the earthly Church. Truth
and falsehood are often intermingled as the wheat and weed
in Jesus' parable. But it is only in the ultimate sifting that
truth untainted by error and falsehood emerges. It is our hope
in the promise of Christ and trust in the guidance of the
Spirit that enable us to wait patiently for this eschatological
reality. It is part of our humility arising from this hope not
to assert any human reality right here in history as infallible
or eternally binding and to work to wipe out as far possible
the traces of evil and darkness from our human community.

Conclusion

1. Instead of squarely facing the question: 'Is the Church

infallible'', we were trying too see if any seat of authority within the Church is infallible' The answer is negative.

2. We avoided the direct question because there is not such notion as the 'infallibility of the Church' in the Oriental Orthodox tradition.

3. We recognized that the real issues behind the Roman Catholic formulation of infallibility were the issues of unity of the universal church based on the universal jurisdiction of the Universal Pastor, and authority of the Roman Pontiff based on the idea of Petrine Office. We found that such notions as universal church, universal jurisdiction, vicar of Christ, Petrine office, special Petrine ministry are alien to the ancient Eastern tradition.

4. We found that the principle of conciliarity on all levels of the Church and not simply the conciliar decisions of some ecumenical councils, is given great value as authoritative for the life of the Church.

5. However this principle does not claim any infallibility and is continually open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

6. Dogmatic definitions and propositions are not isolated from the experience of the Church in life and worship. *Dogma* in not isolated from *doxa*, praise of God, worship.

7. The full manifestation of Truth is an eschatological event which we wait for in faith, hope and love.

8. God alone is the *solus infallibilis*. This traditional position of the Christian Church has been vigorously voiced ever since the First Vatican Council by the Eastern theologians. The Church as the body of Christ has been given the promise of spotless splendour in the presence of God who is constantly calling the whole created reality to share in his glory, truth and freedom through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit''.[17]

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17. See Paul Verghese, *The Freedom of Man*, Westminster, 1972, pp. 109 ff; T. Ware, *op. cit.* p. 258; H. Kung, *op. cit.* p. 150.

Contemporary Catholic Debate on Infallibility

On 18 July 1980, on the centenary of the proclamation of the dogma of Papal Infallibility by Vatican I, Hans Küng published his book, *Infallible? An Enquiry*.[1] He thought hundred years of life was too long for a Council dogma, and it was high time to reexamine, to reinterpret, and reformulate the substance of the definition. The centennial was marked by numerous studies on the dogma of Infallibility, quite independent of the work of Hans Küng. The Vatican Press published a collection of seventeen essays under the title *The Doctrine of Vatican I* (1969), which brought to light several unknown aspects of Vatican I. In Rome itself, an international, ecumenical Colloquium was held in 1970, under the chairmanship of Enrico Castelli, to examine thoroughly the doctrine of Infallibility, especially from a philosophical and theological point of view. Bishop Francis Simon (former Bishop of Indore)'s book, *Infallibility and the Evidence* (1968) was an attack on the Infallibility from within. In 1969, Gustav Thils of the University of Louvain published a study on *Papal Infallibility*, which was a textual analysis of the definition of Vatican I, pointing out the restrictions and limitations in the exercise of Papal Infallibility. Brian Tierney's book, *Origins of Papal Infallibility 1150–1350* (1972), was a historical study into the origins of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility, and the result of his investigation was shocking. He could trace the doctrine of Papal Infallibility as such only to the latter part of the thirteenth century. A wider publicity was given by the international press to the work of August Hasler, *Pius IX, Papal Infallibility and Vatican I* (1977), because Hasler claimed that Pope Pius IX and the Pro-infallibilists manipulated the council to such an extent that the Council decisions and decrees might not be

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1. Hans Küng, *Unfehlbar?* Benziger Verlag, 1970 (English translation: Eric Mosbacher, London: Collins, 1971).

valid.[2] Peter Chirico's book, *Infallibility: The Crossroads of Doctrine* (1977), also remained outside the Küng-controversy. Chirico approached the question of Infallibility from an anthropological point of view, in the context of man's search for universal and absolute meaning. He emphasized the "process" by which an infallible doctrine is reached, grounding the infallibility upon the *sensus fidei* of the believing community.[3]

But the most controversial and provocative among the works on Infallibility was that of Hans Küng. The contemporary Roman Catholic debate on Infallibility was mainly centred on Küng's book. Reactions to Küng were numerous both appreciative and critical. Karl Rahner was one of those who reacted to Küng quickly, and he edited a volume which included seventeen authors, critical of Küng, and mostly German.[4] The important reactions from the United States-by Gregory Baum, Richard McBrien, Harry McSorley and George Lindbeck – were edited by John J. Kirvan, under the title, *The Infallibility Debate*.[5] Hans Kung responded to his critics and published a balance-sheet of the debate in a thick volume of more than five hundred pages, which included seventeen essays by his supporters, an extensive critical survey by himself, and a comprehensive bibliography on the Infallibility debate.[6]

In the following sections of this review of the contemporary Catholic debate on Infallibility we shall in the first part outline the views and argumentation of Hans Kung on the question. In the second part, we shall indicate the major lines of objection raised against Kung, and in the concluding part, we shall try to gather some of the results of this debate, and

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2. *Time*, CX, No. 20, Nov. 14 (1977).

3. For a review of recent literature on Infallibility, See John T. Ford, "Infallibility: A Review of Recent Studies", *Theological Studies* XL, 2 (1979), 273-305.

4. Karl Rahner (ed.), *Zum Problem Unfehlbarkeit*, Freiburg: Herder, 1971.

5. John J. Kirvan (ed.), *The Infallibility Debate*, New York: Paulist Press, 1971.

6. Hans Kung (ed.), *Fehlbar? Eine Bilanz*, Einsiedln: Benziger Verlag, 1973.

certain insights we have gained for a better understanding of
the dogma of infallibility.

I

Hans Kung on infallibility

Hans Kung wrote his book *In fallible* ? out of deep dis-
appointment with the official teaching authority of the Church,
especially with Pope Paul VI and his Curia, who exercised
their authority in a pre-Vatican fashion, that is, 'backward-
looking, unecumenical, and traditionalist'.[7] Kung saw that the
credibility of the teaching authority was at a low ebb with
Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. So he decided to
examine critically the nature and function of the Church's
teaching authority In fact, Kung wanted to divest the teaching
authority in the Church of its absolute claims; he questioned
the infallibility attributed to the teaching office of the Church.

Küng did not start with a theoretical denial of the in-
fallibility of the teaching office. But he concretely examined a
case where the teaching office committed an error: Pope Paul
VI in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae* taught that recourse to all
artificial means of birth control is immoral and sinful. But this
was against the majority opinion of the Commission, set up
by the Pope to study this question. It was also contrary to
the present consciousness in the Church, as a large section in
the Church, including Bishops and theologians, has rejected
this official teaching of the Church. To a good number of
others it was a doubtful teaching. Why did Pope Paul join the
conservative side on this issue ? It was, Hans Kung argued,
because of the Pope's belief in the infallibility of the ordinary
teaching authority of the Church. The Pope did not want to
admit an error in the traditional teaching of the Church,
especially of his predecessors on such a grave matter. The
Church always and everywhere authoritatively taught that con-
traception was grave sin or evil, and the faithful were bound
to believe and follow it. It was considered to be part of the
Catholic faith (*fides Catholica*), although not defined by the Pope

7. Hans Kungs, *In fallible?* London: Collins, 1971, p. 13.

ex cathedra or by a general Council *(de fide definita)*. Such a teaching of the ordinary *magisterium* has been always considered *infallible*. Cardinal Felici, who was the Secretary General of the Vatican II, wrote in *Osservatore Romano* as follows : 'Since they are not faced with a definition *ex cathedra* (in the case of *Humanae Vitae*), some indeed conclude that the teaching is not infallible, and thus there is a possibility of change. In connection with this problem it must be borne in mind that a truth can be sure and certain, and therefore binding, even without the charism of an *ex cathedra* definition, as indeed is the case with the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in which the Pope as Supreme Teacher of the Church proclaims a truth that has constantly been taught by the Church's teaching office and corresponds to revealed doctrine.' [8] But for Hans Küng the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is a clear case of the fallibility of the teaching office of the Church. So he questioned the very doctrine of the infallibility of its teaching office.

The dogma of Papal Infallibility or the infallibility of the teaching office of the Roman Pontiff was defined by Vatican I (1870). Vatican II did not discuss this question but just reiterated the teaching of Vatican I. In the light of modern exegetical, historical and ecumenical studies, Hans Küng argued that the definition of Vatican I had no firm foundations in Scripture and in the common tradition of the first millennium, Vatican I itself clarified that infallibility did not mean a new revelation or inspiration to the Pope or to the Council of Bishops. Infallibility meant a special gift or charism given to the teaching office of the Church to identify the truths of revelation. So the definition of Vatican I simply said that the dogma of infallibility was a truth of revelation. Now the question raised by Hans Kung is whether the council really succeeded in showing from Scripture and tradition that it is a revealed dogma. He thinks that the Council could not do that. Vatican I's treatment on Infallibility had only two references to the Scriptures - Mt 16:18, "So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it"

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8. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

and Lk 22: 32, "I have prayed for you Simon that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered you in your turn must strengthen your brothers". According to contemporary exegetes these texts cannot demonstrate the teaching office of Peter or his infallibility. Peter or the Apostles never claimed infallibility in the sense of impossibility of falling into error'. Even if they had infallibility, Hans Kung argues, it is impossible to demonstrate that the bishops are the successors of the Apostles in their capacity as teachers in any direct and exclusive sense. The Apostolic mission and ministry belonged to the whole Church. The emergence of monarchical episcopacy with the claim of apostolic succession is a later historical development. [9] Mt 16:18 was first quoted in support of Roman Primacy only in the fourth century and that too by the Bishops of Rome, Damasus and Leo, but without any claim to infallibility. Contemporary historical studies show that the doctrine of Papal Infallibility as such originated only in the twelth century, and Kung maintained that it was Thomas Aquinas who laid the doctrinal and theological foundations for the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. But Aquinas's historical documentations are from the forged Pseudo Isidorean Decretals. Of course, Aquinas did so in good faith. From all these facts Hans Kung concluded that Vatican I's definition of Papal Infallibility has no strong foundations in Scripture and tradition.

In Vatican I itself many fathers questioned not only the opportuneness of the definition of Papal Infallibility, but also its doctrinal and theological basis. Quite contrary to the practice of other Councils, Vatican I defined this dogma not in the context of any particular heresy. The definition was an assertion of the Roman sovereignty in spiritual terms in the context of the political threat from the Italian unification movement which wanted Rome to be its capital, and in the context of anti-clericalism and the increasing opposition against the Church from the European National States. The driving force behind the definition was Pope Pius IX himself, his own personal interest and ambitions and that of his supporters, the Ultra-

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

Montane party. The definition of Papal Primacy and Infallibility was considered to be a personal victory of the Pope against the ungodly powers.

So if Vatican's definition of Infallibility has no strong foundations in scripture and tradition, and if the historical background of the Council is the one outlined above, should we simpl reject the dogma of Infallibility? But then what about the Biblical promises? Christ's promises to the Church are clear that the Lord will remain with the Church until the end of times, and the gates of hell will not overcome the Church, and that the Spirit of Truth will abide in the Church and will lead her into the fullness of the truth. Hans Küng suggests that these Biblical promises do not mean infallibility in the sense of Vatican I, that is, *infallibility of certain of propositions* or dogmatic statements. Of course, in the Church, in the community we need statements of faith, for faith needs outward, visible and verbal expressions or articulations which are a spontaneous and necessary activity. Christian faith is not dump, but a knowing faith, a professing faith, a proclamation, and such articulations or statements of faith are present in the Bible and in the tradition of the Church. But originally these statements of faith were diverse, flexible, open to change, and never meant to be fixed once for all, and binding for all places and all times. These statements of faith were not metaphysical or dogmatic statements as we understand them today. Originally they were spontaneous confessions or proclamations of faith or certain rules for the Christian religious language system, aimed at a particular historical context and period. Statements of faith have the same fate as all other human propositions 'that fall short of reality, are always liable to be misunderstood, are not always translatable, are constantly on the move, shifting and changing their meaning, are so susceptible to ideology and never absolutely clarifiable'.[10] So Kung rejects infallibility if it is understood to be the possession of a set of infallible statements or the authority and privilege of the teaching office in the Church to make certain infallible statements. Possibility of error in the doctrinal statements of the teaching office in the Church must be honestly admitted, as they are human statements.

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10. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

But Hans Kung affirmed his faith in the promises of the Lord, that the Church would abide in truth inspite of all her errors in the past, in spite of all possible errors in her doctrinal statements. Church's 'abiding in truth', its 'perpetuity' or 'continuity in truth', its 'indestructibility' or 'imperishability' as witnessed in the Scriptures and tradition, and as supported by the facts of Church history, is not the same as the infallibility of Church's propositions or statements, not the same as the infallibility of its teaching office whether of the Council or of the Pope. Thus promise or gift to the Church of 'abiding in the truth' may be called 'Infallibility'. But it is a misleading term, because today it means 'faultlessness' and 'infallible propositions'. So Hans Kung would replace it with another term - *indefectibility* of the Church' or the 'Church's indefectibility in the truth.' Indefectibility means that the Church will abide in the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, inspite of all her errors in detail, in spite of all possible errors in the statements of the teaching office of the Church. The promises to the Church gives her confidence and hope on her journey towards the final absolute truth; it summons her continually to make fresh start after each failure and mistake. The Church is an exodus community like Israel, but with the promise of final victory or triumph. Hans Küng also shows that this view of infallibility as indefectibility is in conformity with the views of the other Churches both Orthodox and Protestant. So the acceptance of this view, he claims, will have tremendous ecumenical significance.

II

Critical reactions to Hans Kung

Although Hans Küng's book *Infallible*? was widely acclaimed as a theological best seller, serious Catholic theologians had several reservations and disagreements. Many found that Kung's typical profoundness was unfortunately lacking in this book, possibly, because here he launched into polemics against Pope Paul and the Roman Curia. Many exegetes and historians pointed out that Küng was not accurate in exegetical and historical details, especially when he dealt with past errors of the teaching office in the Church. It was pointed out that in none of these errors of the teaching office an infallible judgement or definition was involved. Walter Brandmüller challenged the assertion of Kung that Thomas Aquinas, who laid theological and doctrinal foundation for Papal Primacy and Infallibi-

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-158.

lity, had the historical documentations from the forged Decretals of Pseudo-Isidore. According to Brandmuller, modern historical research has shown that Pseudo Isidore had taken his documentation from a more ancient source, the *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* of Cassiodorus (560).[14] In general, we could say that most of the serious Catholic theologians rejected the conclusion of Kung, and they were surprised to see that he reached new conclusion from old premises which were known to them from his previous books.

By the fact that Kung reached a new conclusion of rejecting the infallibility of the dogmatic definitions of the Church and its teaching authority, several Catholic theologians suspected his orthodoxy and Roman Catholic allegiance. Many pointed out that Kung had finally accepted the position which he had characterized as 'Protestant' in his previous books - the position of *sola Scriptura*, rejecting the authority of the teaching office in the Church to be the authentic interpreter of the Scripture.[13] But it depends on whether Kung fully rejected the definition of Vatican I or only wanted to give a new interpretation to the dogma of Infallibility. After all, he does not say that all the dogmatic definitions of the Church may be erroneous, that the Church cannot make binding statements. Besides, he wrote his book as an *Enquiry* and he was ready for dialogue.

All the critics were unanimous on one point: Hans Kung had a bad starting point. He started with the concrete case of *Humanae Vitae*. The Church always and everywhere taught that contraception was evil and sinful. In continuity with his predecessors Pope Paul VI reiterated this teaching. Hans Kung argued that this was practically considered to be an infallible teaching but now found to be erroneous in the experience of so many Christians. So he rejected the very doctrine of Infallibility. Karl Rahner pointed out that the question was not whether *Humanae Vitae* was erroneous, but whether, it was a dogma, an infallible teaching. Avery Dulles, Richard McBrien, Harry McSorley, and almost all critics agreed with Rahner that the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* was not a dogma; it was not declared as an infallible definition either by the Pope (*ex cathedra*) or by a Council. It was only the ordinary teaching of a Pope through the encyclical. Of course, there were some in the Theological Commission of Vatican II who maintained that

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12. Walter Brandmuller, "Kung's Misuse of Historical Evidence", *Theology Digest* XIX (1971), 207-212.
13. See John J. Kirvan, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 67.

a doctrine of the ordinary magisterium was a dogma or infallible, if it was commonly taught for a long period and accepted practically by all catholics. But Vatican II rejected this view and held that ordinary magisterium is infallible only when all the Bishops together with the Pope in communion with each other teach a doctrine as absolutely binding and clearly propose it as *revealed* and demanding the *absolute assent of faith*.[14] And clearly, this was not the case with *Humanae Vitae*. So Hans Kung has not attacked the doctrine of Infallibility as clearly defined by Vatican I with several restrictions but the Ultra-Montane concept of Infallibility which was rejected by Vatican I. Of course, it may be true that this exaggerated idea of Infallibility may be still lingering on the mind of many Catholics today. But Kung was certainly mistaken when he argued that the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* and the doctrine of Papal Infallibility stand or fall together.[15]

Hans Kung argued that the dogma of Papal infallibility as defined by Vatican I had no strong foundations in the Scripture and tradition. His search for firm foundations may be appreciated as the responsible task of a critical theologian. But to many critics, his search for "proofs" smacked a tendency of rationalism which he himself abhorred.[16] In matters of faith absolute proofs are not given. Can we "prove" absolutely from Scriptures that Jesus is the Son of God? Can we give absolute "proofs" for the Resurrection of Jesus? Harry McSorley pointed out that in matters of faith and Christian dogmas, it is much better to speak of Scriptural "indications" rather than "proofs".[17] Many essential elements in the Church both in belief and practice, as they exist today, are the result of an organic and historical development, and they may be found in the Scriptures or in the Apostolic Church only germinally. The basic theological principle behind this is the continuous presence and activity of Jesus and his Spirit in the Church which is constantly being guided through the vicissitudes of history. Hans Kung's too much insistance for Biblical "proofs", that everthing must be clearly identifiable in the scriptures, betrays a kind of 'Biblicism" which rejects all historical development. Bible itself is a historical document

14. Karl Rahner, "Rahner's Criticism of Küng", *Theology Digest* XIX (1971), 109; also John J. Kirvan, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 78-83.

15. Richard P. McBrien in *The Infallibility Debate*, p. 39.

16. Mary J. McSorley in *The Infallibility Debate*, p. 74.

17. *Ibid.*

which needs reinterpretation.[18]   Post-Biblical developments
cannot be simply rejected or considered to be simply "human"
(*jus humanum*) as opposed to "divine" (*jus divinum*). Taking
into consideration the historical nature of the Church and its
guidance by the Spirit, Post-Biblical developments in the Spirit
of the Gospel may be seen as *human divine*, opposed to merely
human.[19] So Kung's tendency to reject whatever is not clearly
identifiable in the Bible is not healthy. Gregory Baum remarked:
"While he (Kung) makes dogma relative in regard to the
abiding Scriptural norm, I think it is theologically sounder and
historically more correct to make dogma relative in regard to
the Church's ongoing, authoritative self definition."[20]

Many critics found that Kung's treatment of Infallibility
was not very profound, and that he did not do justice to the
dogmatic statements of the Church. He rejected the infallibility
of dogmatic statements defined by the Pope or the Council,
and even those contained in the Bible, because they are all
inadequate, ambiguous, limited and contingent like all other
human statements. He argued that indefectibility of the Church
or her abiding in truth does not mean the necessity of infalli-
ble statements of faith. But Karl Rahner, Otto Semmlroth,
Rudolf Schnackenburg, Kevin McNamara, Gregory Baum,
George Lindbeck and many others argue that indefectibility of
the Church requires certain infallible statements of faith and in
fact they do exist in the Church. Some theologians pointed
out the contradiction in Kung himself: Kung agreed that the
Church must speak out with authority in extreme case of life
and death for the Church, as she did in the ancient Eccumeni-
cal Councils. But if her statements may be erroneous, as Kung
argues, what is the meaning of her indefectibility? Every re-
ligion, especially Christianity, is grounded upon certain central
infallible affirmations. Take for example the affirmation: 'Jesus
is Lord". If it is proved false Christianity will disappear, be-
cause this affirmation is essential to its identity.[21] Rahner
maintains that man has to objectivate his fundamental option
or his absolute commitment in verbal statements and he can
experience these statements as infallibly true and absolutely
binding, as the unambiguous expression of his fundamental

18.   Gregory Baum in *The Infallibility Debate*, p. 11.

19.   Magnns Löhrer, "Towards a Discussion of Infallibi-
lity", *Worship* 45 (1971) 283.

20.   Gregory Baum, art. cit., p. 17.

21.   George Lindbeak in *The Infallibility Debate*, pp.
103-121.

option itself. [22]   But what is the meaning of the infallibility of a dogmatic statement? It means there is a definitive truth in that statement and this truth must be distinguished from its contingent historical form, Kevin McNamara clearly pointed out that only with this basic distinction can we defend the doctrine of Infallibility. Infallibility is compatible with in-adequacy of language, incomplete or even one-sided perception of truth, error in matters of science, and with other human limitations. Infallibility is only "a guarantee against error in the definitive statement of faith which is embedded in the framework of limited human concepts".[23] Dogmatic statements are not atemporal, ahistorical, abstract statements, but state-ments made at a particular time and place and at a particular historical context. The fact that today they are susceptible to different interpretations does not mean that they are not infallible It only means that their real meaning must be care-fully studied and maintained. [24] And to preserve and communi-cate their true meaning today, often we have to reinterpret, revise and reformulate these dogmatic statements. So infalli-bility of a dogmatic statement does not mean that it cannot be reformulated more adequately in contemporary terms. More-over, the modern notion of the development of dogma demands revision and reformulation of ancient dogmas, and not a rejec-tion of them. Therefore, Hans Kung's rejection of the doctrine of infallibility on the basis of the limitations of human state-ments also seems to be unjustifiable to many theologians.

III

Conclusion

Our brief exposition of the views and argumentations of Hans Kung and the critical reactions to him may help the reader to decide for himself or herself wherein the truth lies. We do not want to make here any personal evaluation of the views of Hans Kung and his critics. However, we would like to point out certain results of this debate as well as the insights we have gained for a better understanding and reinterpretation of the dogma of Infallibility.

The recent debate on Infallibility has revea le that the notion of Infallibility prevalent among many

22.   Karl Rahner, "Rahner's Criticism of Küng", *Theology Digest* XIX (1971), 110.
23.   Kevin McNamara, "Indefectible and not Infallible", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 38 (1971) 330.
24.   *Ibid.*, p. 332.

catholics was an exaggerated one extending it to the ordinary teachings of the Popes and the official Church. Vatican I had clearly dismissed such an exaggerated notion entertained by the Ultra-Montanes. According to the teaching of Vatican I and II the Church can make infallible doctrinal statements or definitions on faith and morals within the limits of revealed truths, definitions that are binding on all the faithful. Such definitions can be made by an Ecumenical Council or by the Pope himself as the successor of Peter and as the Head of the Episcopal College. But in practice such infallible authority is exercised very seldom. After Vatican I, it was exercised only once, that is, in 1950 by Pope Pius XII when he defined the Assumption of Mary. Vatican II did not make any infallible pronouncement. So practicably speaking, Infallibility does not have a dominant role in the day-to day life of the Church. It is not the ordinary means of teaching, nor the primary means of communicating the Word. It is generally exercised only in extra-ordinary situations when the Church is faced with new questions or crisis, when her faith is in danger, and when she is forced to make a judgement. In contemporary pluralistic age, perhaps, the Church may never make such an infallible statement binding on all.

The dogma of Infallibility can be better interpreted, if it is understood as a charism given to the whole Church. The whole Christian community has been entrusted with the Gospel and its proclamation. The community expresses its faith, articulates it, for its own worship, for self-understanding and for proclamation or communication. But these expressions or articulations of faith are always historically and culturally bound, marked with the inevitable human limitations and inadequacy. So as the Church moves on in history, she is forced to revise, reformulate and reinterpret her statements of faith and dogmas. In this task of continuous reinterpretation, judgement and communication the Church is given a special charism to protect her faith, to safeguard it from error. This special charism is called the Infallibility of the Church. Vatican II understood Infallibility this way. According to *Lumen Gentium*, "The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One cannot err in matters of belief" (No 12). The task of the *magisterium* is to discover, identify, articulate and publicly proclaim this faith of the community (*sensus fidei sensus fidelium*), this "spirit guided awareness" of the community. In this special task of protecting the faith through public utterances, the *magisterium* or the hierarchy is given a special charism, which is the Infallibility of the Pope and the Infallibility of the Council. The hierarchy always

exercised such a teaching function as is sufficiently indicated in the New Testament and in the early Christian tradition. The Fathers of the early Ecumenical Councils were fully aware of the assistance of the Holy Spirit given to them in the act of their dogmatic definitions and decisions. But there are no three infallibilities - Infallibility of the Church, Infallibility of the Council, and Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff. There is only one Infallibility, Infallibility of the Church, which is being exercised either by the Ecumenical Council, or by the Roman Pontiff in communion with the Episcopal College.

The source of Infallibility is divine assistance, the Holy Spirit, God Himself, who alone is infallible. The divine assistance or charism is given to the community, to the Ecumenical Council and to the Pope as the head of the Episcopal College, in their common and united act of articulating their faith in a definitive and binding manner. Theologically speaking the bond or the communion between the Pope and the Episcopal College, between the hierarchy and the community, is essential for the valid exercise of Infallibility. The danger comes when the Pope becomes isolated from the Episcopal College or when the Pope and the Episcopal College remain isolated from the community. More dangerous is the situation when the Church, both the hierarchy and the community, refuses to listen to the voice of the Spirit speaking to it through the Scriptures and through contemporary experience or through the signs of the times, and thus when the Church separates itself from the Word of God. In such sinful situations of disunity the Church will not be given the charism of Infallibility.

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Papal Infallibility : Random Reflections of a Non-Roman Catholic Indian-Christian

I am grateful to the Editorial Board of *Jeevadhara* for inviting me to reflect upon the question of papal infallibility. However, I feel rather uncomfortable in doing so. For, I think it is presumptuous on the part of any non-Roman Catholic to tell what is wrong in a dogma that is cherished by Roman-Catholics as precious. I would like to emphasize that my intention is not at all to do something like that. But with great trepidation, I want to express frankly what many Protestants including myself find as problematic for ourselves in the dogma, looking at it from only the tradition that has nurtured me in faith.

The problem is doubly difficult for there are not many non-Roman Catholic thinkers who have seriously grappled with the dogma. Formal response to the problem from Indian Protestant Churches is almost negligible. While several have stated that it is a crucial area for the future of ecumenism, sustained reflection has not been done by many. But it is too significant an issue to be set aside. If our collective reflection on this issue could further the present creative uneasiness among Catholic thinkers issuing forth in a renewed understanding of the mystery behind the dogma, it is worth taking the risk. With willingness to learn, and with full knowledge of my limitations, let me offer my random reflections of the issue.

The legitimate concerns behind the dogma

In the past much of the Protestant attack upon the dogma has been on the ground that there are many historical instances of Popes making errors while they defined and proclaimed doctrinal or moral definitions for the Universal Church. But I think in the process we have overlooked the essential concerns that underlie the dogma. They are and must be shared by Christians of all traditions.

However, it must be noted that it is unfortunate that, more often than not, the Roman Catholic theologians have tended to define the concerns of the dogma primarily in negative terms. The following are some examples: infallibility is "immunity from error, the enjoyment of a guarantee that

error is avoided", and "an 'assistance' preventing the Church giving expression to any final and fatal error about the Faith".[1]

Underlying this negative approach, we can discern even in the definition of infallibility as set forth by Vatican I on July 18, 1870, various profound concerns for the well being of the Church of Christ. The following are some of them: Concern for the continuity and permanence of the Church; desire for the purity in doctrine; the being of the church transcending, in some sense, the relativities of time; unity in Faith and for-mulation of doctrines; and the decisiveness of the Church in the world. It also arises out of a deep desire to affirm some-how God's never failing mercy toward his people in history. As Austin Farrar, an Anglican thinker puts it, it is "an expre-ssion of the faith that God will effectively guide the Church in the way of truth and salvation." [2]

Essential as all these concerns for the faith and life of the Church are, one wonders whether they really necessitate the particular manner in which Vatican I formulated the dogma and the manner in which it has been perpetuated by several official theologians of the Church It is my belief that all the concerns that underlie the dogma can be upheld without a dogma of infallibility. While as a Protestant I would want to affirm as clearly as possible "the mysterious and permanent presents of the Word in the Church", it seems to me that it does not necessitate a dogma of papal infallibility.

Besides, the possibilities of misuse of such a dogma are many. Catholic historians point to several instances in the history of the Church when this has been so. During and immediately after Vatican I, several responsible Catholic thin-kers including Cardinal Newman have voiced such possible dangers and therefore have opposed the promulgation of the dogma.[3] In addition to the possible misuse, there are other problems as well; particularly when viewed from the stand-point of a non-Roman Catholic Christian. The dogma as pro-pounded in July 1870 seems to endanger search for ecumenical relations, minimize the great gains made in recent biblical

1. Cited in John T. Ford, 'Infallibility: From Vatican I to the Present,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 8 (Fall 1971), p. 781.
2. M. Novak, Authority in Ecumenical Perspective,' *Journal of Ecumenical* Studies 3 (1966), p. 368.
3. Cited in J. T. Ford, Op. Cit., p. 786.

scholarship, and undermine the normal processes of doctrinal development. It seems to emphasise the doctrine of the church improportionately within the whole of Christian doctrine. The relation between Bishops, priests and the laity as well as between scripture, tradition and contemporary experience of the Church appear to be lopsided within the scope of this dogma. It also seems to sacrifice the concern for mission and the relevance of the being of the Church in and for the world to an overt concern for doctrinal inerrancy and purity The understanding of truth that underlies the dogma needs to be examined. From the perspective of the Protestant Churches, the relation between the Pope, Bishops and the Councils does also seem to be problematic. Several Roman Catholic theologians both in the past and present seem to share some of these questions with respect to the dogma. Developing some of these questions with a spirit of inquiry is the intention of this brief presentation.

Critical response to the dogma

1. From a methodological standpoint

i. Infallibility and the definition of any theological dogma: Dogma of any community of faith that shares in a radical theistic belief, i. e. belief in a transcendent God – the only ground of all that ever is can be, by definition, only *relative*. For God as ground of everything that is, relativizes everything else that is, including the dogmas about Himself and His Church. I think that Christian theism by definition cannot have anything infallible other than God. We modern Protestants are painfully learning to live by the discovery that our cherished dogma of a biblical infallibility and inerrancy has become a fallen idol and that before God, the great Relativizer of all else before Him, the Bible cannot be infallible. Within our Indian heritage of great Achāryas as Sankara we are called to re-examine the finality of anything other than God Himself.

ii. Infallibility and history: Secondly I think the dogma of papal infallibility does not seem to take seriously the historicality of the community of faith, the Church and its ministers seriously. In every formulation of thought and in every articulation does not the dynamic and shifting historical quality of human life, both individual and communal, play an important role?[2] Recent biblical scholarship has taught us to see the determinant character of the socio-cultural context on all theological formulations. If this is the case can we claim

an over-ruling of the historicality of an Officer of the Church, even the highest in his promulgation of ecclesiastical dogmas. As Ray Hart suggests, when that happens, that is, "when dogma is severed from its root in religious imagination, it becomes merely a counter in an 'intricate intellectual chess game' or a piece of outright ideology (i. e, a rational explanation of a position taken on non-rational grounds).[4]

    iii. Infallibility and the history of the dogma of papal infallibility: Leonard Swidler and Brian Tierney, citing several historical instances in the history of the papacy, demonstrate the sociocultural conditioning of dogmas promulgated by various Popes. Tierney, after a historical survey concludes, "The doctrine did not emerge inevitably because it had always been presupposed. It was invented almost fortuitously because an unusual concatenation of historical circumstances arose which made such a doctrine useful to a particular group of Franciscan controversialists.[5]

    I consider that this statement is rather exaggerated and it overlooks the fact that it really met also the need of the community of faith for a visible centre of unity and a voice that can singularly speak on issues on behalf of the faithful. But if the historical data that Tierney and Ford provide are accurate, then it may be also that "the reliance of infallibility tends to become a security-mechanism, divorced from an authentic faith grounded in historical revelation"[6].

    iv. Infallibility and the historical character of revelation: Christian revelation, as testified to in the Biblical records, seems to be a dynamic process, a process of emergence of dramatic patterns of meaning for persons and community of faith as they encounter the realty of God in their *present* history in the light of their communal *memory* and their collective *hope* for the future. If God reveals Himself at the intersection of the memory and hope of a community in their each new present, speaking of 'infallible definitions' and "irreformability *ex sese*' is rather problematic to one like me, nurtured in the Protestant tradition. The frustration is accentu-

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4. *Unifinished Man and Imagination*, Herder and Herder, N. Y. 1968, p. 24-25.

5. Origin of Papal Infallibility, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 8 (1971), p. 863.

6. Ford, Op. cit., p. 782.

ated since we ourselves are just now learning to live in the "ruins of our fallen idol", the infallibility of the Bible.

v. Infallibility and development of dogma: The development of doctrine through the centuries of Christian history indicates that it is an *organic process* of interaction between Scriptural testimony, tradition, i. e., the corporate communal memory, and concrete historical experience of the community. But the dogma of papal infallibility short-circuits this organic process and seems to suggest that the dogmas and doctrine that Pope may promulgate rather arises out of the decision and insight of the Pope himself. For according to the definition of infallibility in Vatican I while the Pope speaks on behalf of the Church he may do so "without the consent of the Church."

vi. Infallibility and propositional certainty: As a final methodologically oriented reflection upon the dogma, I would like to identify Hans Kung's reference to the problem of reducing faith into clearly definable propositions. I think Kung is right when he says, the truth of the message is not a system of self-evident propositions that produce certainty on certain lines. The reality of God is not obvious in Cartesian sense. Neither is the truth of the Christian message a system of infallible definitions that might provide certainty on neo-scholastic lines. Certainty... arises only when the individual opens himself to him who is proclaimed in that message, whether the truth of any single proposition is greater or lesser, is more adequate or less adequate to that message.[7]

No proposition or definition, however clear it may be, can represent reality, namely God, world, humans and history finally, irreformably, exactly or completely. To hold that it can because God, the supreme Head of the Church, through His grace wills it, is to hold that God intends blocking the way to any advance in our understanding of God, universe and all else. Such a position can have disastrous consequences for the Christian faith, practice and order. One may argue that my identification of this danger is rather crude and uninformed, but one can point out that in the history of the Church several have argued that the infallibility of papal pronouncement on behalf of the Church is final, irrevocable and that there can be no further court of appeal. What the Roman

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7. Infallible?, p. 124.

Pontiffs have once defined in faith and morals through the key of knowledge is immutable . . . it cannot be called into doubt by any successor . . . . . it is true for all eternity.[8]

2. From a theological stand-point

i. Ecclesiology: We all affirm that one dominant way of expressing the self-understanding of the Church is through the metaphor 'the people of God'. The people of God are constituted as a people by the covenant promise of God and His call to us to be His 'pilgrim' people with a mission to be a blessing to all else. This implies several things. First, the identity of the people of God stems from God's covenant-promises and His call that keeps us continually moving ahead into His own future. This constitutive promise of God creates in us an anticipatory awareness and provides us the freedom and openness to lead God's call at different times in different ways. Both the Old Testament prophets and Jesus of Nazareth condemned the tendency to reify promises of God to God's people into unalterable law, decree or dogma as sin of unbelief in a God who always goes before his people doing new things.

I think that this self understanding of ourselves as the pilgrim people of God constituted and sustained by the covenant promises of God cannot allow any specific definition or expression to be made into an infallible proposition. Ford points out that during the winter of 1869-70 and just prior to the Vatican I's voting on the dogma of infallibility the slogan, 'the dogma must conquer history' was in constant use. But the Biblical understanding of the Church seems to say the opposite; that history lived under God's promise must give rise to doctrine and it is only in the light of the continually renewed history of the people of God that our understanding of God, humans and their inter relationships must be understood and formulated again and again afresh.

Secondly, our self-understanding as the people of God in the Christian tradition is nurtured by stories of their continued encounter with God in time, space and history. As Paul Minear puts it, "The memories of these acts became stories that as paradigms of communal history conveyed the inner dynamic of the life of God's people."[9] Such a dynamic corporate memory that powerfully activated their imagination

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8. Cited in Tierney, op. cit., p. 861.
9. *Images of the Church in the New Testament*. Philedelphia, Westminister, 1960, p. 77.

and provided them again and again the sense of their self-identity, vocation and destiny. What was at stake in the struggle between the pharisees and the scribes on the one hand and Jesus on the other was precisely this sort of a struggle between the attempt to reify segments of communal memory as infallible and the attempt to keep the memory alive within a promise-expectancy structure or style of life as Jesus would have it. In the words of Gabriel Marcel, it is a struggle between degenerating living history into well-defined 'inscription' and keeping it alive as 'living memory'. I wonder whether claims for the infallibility of the teaching of the Church or the Pope do not tend to turn dynamic history into 'inscription'.

In this sense, the Church is called upon to *persevere* in truth in the light of God's ever new promises rather than to be *preserved* in truth reified once and for all. Herein, I am pre-supposing, of course, a particular understanding of truth applicable within the Christian theological discourse. Truth cannot simply be a quality of clearly defined irreformable propositions; but rather it is a quality of 'whole-making', saving, life-orienting relation between God and his people.

If Church is understood as the dynamic movement of the people of God, a dynamic social process, then the authority of the Church and its teaching cannot lie in irreformably formulated infallible propositions, decrees or dogmas. The authority of the teaching will rather be through ever renewed paradigmatic statements that arise out of the concrete present with a power to orient lives and bring about fullness of life; briefly put, power and authority of the Church is in its apostolicity, in its sent out character. If so, I wonder whether we can speak of the Church's teaching being infallible at all. As Ian Ramsey, the former Anglican Bishop of Durham puts it: "... the authority of the Church will never have an infallible expression and that an authoritarianism which runs to death one possible expression is indefensible. The Church's authoritative challenge is one which will always be linked with fallibility But this is no weakness. It enables the Church to see where her treasure really is; it gives her an authority which .. can be associated with personal freedom and integrity and it leads to a constructive and appropriate involvement in contemporary society".[10]

Finally, Church as the people of God is also a part of the human community. It is part of the world, though it is

10. 'The Authority of the Church Today,' in R. R. Williams Ed., *Authority and the Church*, London, S. P. C. K., 1965, p. 80.

that part wherein the presence and activity of God are consciously acknowledged, responded and witnessed to. As such it does share in the world's fallibility and apprehends God's grace and demand only partially. It is only in the midst of its fallibility, the unceasing grace and power of God shine through. What is infallible is not the Church, its teaching or its supreme head, the Pope, but rather the irresistible grace of God in Christ. It is not the 'earthen vessel' but the treasure that is in it that is infallible.

ii. Church as the sacrement of God's redempitve presence in Christ and infallibility: Both the Roman Catholics and the Protestants alike affirm that the Church is the sacrament of salvation. As sacrament it includes as its nature the polar correlates of permenance and discontinuity with the world on the one hand and with the kingdom of God on the other; Church is not identical with the kingdom nor it is simply identical with the world. It is both in the world and yet not of the world. I think in any adequate doctrine of the Church, the doubly-determined character of the Church must be maintained. From the history of the use of the dogma of infallibility, it appears that the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church, its teaching and papal definitions tend to mitigate the bi-polar characteristic of the Church. As Joseph Kottukapally puts it: To forget this polarity and dialectic will mean nothing less than perversion of faith.[11]

iii. Church as the household of God, the fundamental equality among the various ministries and infallibility: The New Testament singularly affirms the fundamental unity, mutuality and equality of all ministries and charisms within the Church. Unless this radical affirmation of mutuality is affirmed, it will be a perversion of authentic understanding of the ministry of Christ. Here again, the dogma of infallibility as it is interpreted and upheld by the Church seems to be highly problematic for a non-Roman Christian. But one is encouraged however to see that many responsible theologians of the Catholic Church warn the Church from within. The following is one good example: However painful the process, the isolation of magisterium from the community must end. The mystique authority and the mythical and idolatrous aura of the numinous with which the magisterium surrounds itself must cease to be.[12]

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11. Infallible?–Fallible?, *Indian Journal of Theology*, 22 (1973), p. 109

12. Ibid., p. 101.

iv. The functional difference between the Pope and other bishops and Papal infallibility: *The Suenens Dossier: The Case for Collegiality* seems to establish rather convincingly the functional difference between the Pope and other ministries. If the difference between the Pope and others of the College of Bishops is not an ontological difference, I think, the manner in which the dogma of infallibility is held is rather mistaken. It does not fully bring out the oneness *of the Pope with other Bishops*. Cardinal Suenens argues that ' it is imortant to avoid presenting the role of the pope in such a way as to isolate him from the college of bishops whose leader he is.... It is impossible to over-emphasize the vital unity of the apostolic college.

... The Church is either a family or it is nothing: and in any family there must be open dialogue if misunderstanding are to be got rid of, and the air cleared.[13]

I think that the dogma of infallibility has made the office of the pope into "an essentialist, bureaucratic, static, juridical" sort of an office creating an unbridgeable chasm between the Bishop of Rome and the entire people of God.

On several other theological grounds, such as the Christian understanding of man, we can further establish that the dogma of papal infallibility is seen as problematic for those who belong to traditions other than the Roman-Catholic.

But if our Lord's prayer for the unity of all those who belong to Him must be realized, that which is now seen as one of the major obstacles from the Protestant's point-of-view must be removed or we must be educated to see that it need not indeed be an obstacle or problematic. What we all as members of the one body of Christ long for is a reciprocal life in common. Through open dialogue and willingness to learn and change in the process, we will be given the necessary grace to attain such reciprocal life. It is the will of the infallible God and He will see the Church through amidst all its present perplexities and divisions.

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13. Cited in A. B. Crabtree, 'Reflections on The Suenens Dossier,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 1 (1971), p. 628-29.

Models in Ecumenical Dialogue

By Dr. Kuncheria Pathil CMI

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യേശു പ്രാത്ഥികേളകയും തലമുറകളായി ക്രൈസ്തവർ സ്വപ്'നം കാ
ണുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന ക്രൈസ്തവസഭൈക്യം ഇന്നും ഒരു മരീചികയായി നില
കൊള്ളുന്നു മാത്രമല്ല, സഭൈക്യപ്രസ്ഥാനം ഇന്നു ഒരു പ്രതിസന്ധിഘട്ട
ത്തിലാണു. കാലം മാറുംതോറും, ദൈവശാസ്ത്രചിന്ത വളരുന്നതനുസരിച്ചു,
സഭൈക്യപ്രസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ അത്ഥവും ലക്ഷ്യവും അതിനുള്ള ഉപാധികളും
പുനർവിചിന്തനത്തിനു വിധേയമാകണം. ഇല്ലെങ്കിൽ ആ പ്രസ്ഥാനം പഴ
ഞ്ചനായി, അത്ഥമില്ലാത്തതായി പുറന്തള്ളപ്പെടും.

ഈ നൂറാണ്ടിലെ സഭൈക്യപ്രസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ ജീവനാഡിയാണു
Faith and Order Movement. 1910-ൽ ആരംഭിച്ച ഈ പ്രസ്ഥാനം ഇന്നു
സഭകളുടെ സാവ്വദേശീയ കൗൺസിലിന്റെ (World Council of Churches)
ഒരു അവിഭാജ്യഘടകമാണ്. വിശ്വാസവും ക്രമാശകം ഉൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള
സഭോചാരങ്ങളും (faith and order) സംബന്ധിച്ചുള്ള അഭിപ്രായഭിന്നതക
ളാണു ക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഏകസഭയെ ഭിന്നിപ്പിച്ചതു. ഐക്യത്തിനുള്ള ഫാറ്റ്
വും ആ വഴിക്കുതന്നെ വേണം,— വിശ്വാസവും സഭോചാരങ്ങളും സംബന്ധി
ച്ചു പരസ്പര ധാരണയിൽ എത്തുക. ഈ ലക്ഷ്യസംവിധാനത്തിലും ഉപാ
ധികളുടെ സ്വീകരണത്തിലും ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുള്ള വളർച്ചയെയും വ്യതിയാനങ്ങ
ളെയും കുറിച്ചു ഒരു സമഗ്രപഠനമാണു ഈ ഗ്രന്ഥം.

പരസ്പര അംഗീകാരം, വിശുദ്ധ കർബാനയിലുള്ള പങ്കാളിത്തം,
എല്ലാ സഭകളെയും ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തിക്കൊണ്ടൊരു എക്കുമേനിക്കൽ കൗൺസിൽ—
എന്നീ മൂന്നു ലക്ഷ്യങ്ങളാണു ഇന്നു സഭൈക്യപ്രസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ മൻപിലു
ള്ളതു. ഇവയെ ഓരോന്നായി അഭിമുഖീകരിച്ചു, പടിപടിയായി സഭകള
ടെ പൂർണ്ണ ഐക്യം സാധിക്കുകയാണു വേണ്ടതെന്നു ഗ്രന്ഥകാരൻ വാദി
ക്കുന്നു. അതിനുള്ള ഉപാധികളിലേയ്ക്കും ഈ ഗ്രന്ഥം വിരൽചൂണ്ടുന്നു. സഭൈ
ക്യപ്രേമികളായ എല്ലാ ക്രൈസ്തവരും വായിച്ചിരിക്കേണ്ട ഒരു അമൂല്യ
ഗ്രന്ഥമാണു ഇതു.

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